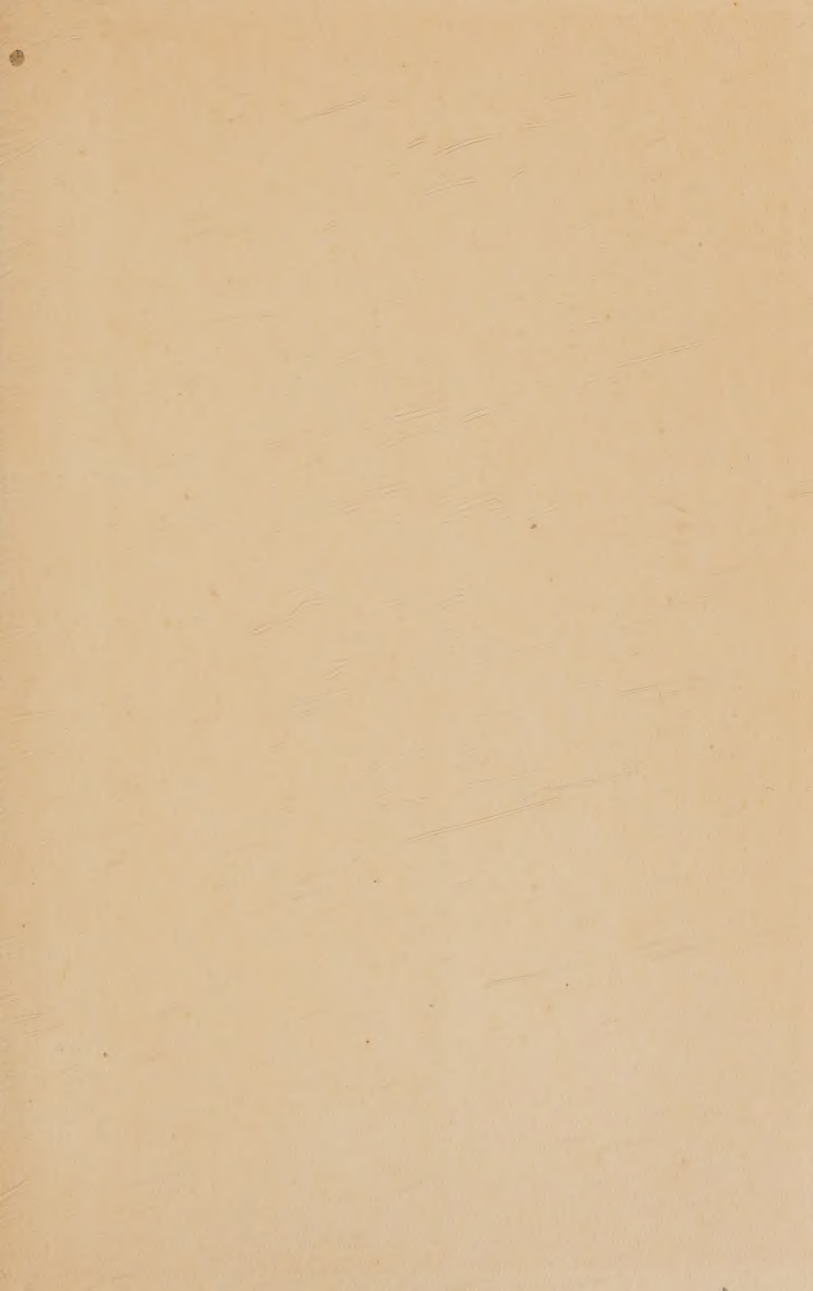






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THE FIRST INSTRUCTION OF
CHILDREN AND BEGINNERS

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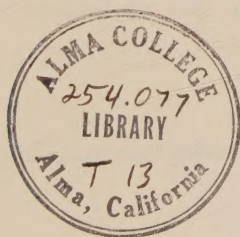
MATTHEW XI, 25

THE FIRST INSTRUCTION OF CHILDREN AND BEGINNERS

*An Inquiry into the Catechetical Tradition
of the Church*

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*Translated from the French by
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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THE author of this book is a Belgian priest who began with ten years' experience of teaching in the diocesan college of La Louvière, where he developed a keen interest in educational method under the influence of one of his colleagues, the late Canon Féron of the diocese of Tournai. Then Fr. Tahon joined the Missionary Congregation of Scheut, and as an expert in education was sent to revitalize Catholic schools in the Philippines, where he has now been for over twenty years. Like so many others, he has come to a profound dissatisfaction with the usual methods of instructing children in religion, and has worked out for himself and for his teachers a system which gives better results. Finding himself on leave in Europe not long ago, he spent his time in going thoroughly into the history of catechetics with the notion of discovering how far the usual methods really represent the mind of the Church. The present book contains the result of his researches, and at the request of his religious superior I have prepared it for publication. I think it ought to be published, because Father Tahon is the first writer (as far as I know) who has taken the trouble to find out the exact truth about the so-called pre-Reformation catechisms, not to mention other facts which will be new at any rate to French and English-speaking readers.

And at this point, now that the author is fairly introduced, will the reader please turn to his preface and to the book itself and read it through? And then, if his interest in the subject is well aroused, perhaps he may care to finish reading this Introduction, which I fear is going to be rather long.

* * * * *

The reader will surely love Father Tahon as I do (though I have never seen him or even heard from him) for his holy indignation on behalf of the children. He writes to prove and persuade, and therefore he has set forth his facts and authorities in argumentative form rather than in a strictly historical survey. There still remains an opportunity, for anyone who has leisure and industry enough, to write the complete history of catechetics in the Church, with special reference to children. When such a history is written I venture to surmise that its outline will go something like this:

Catechetical schools for the regular teaching of converts before and after baptism existed already in sub-apostolic times, at Antioch, Smyrna, Alexandria, and other places; we find for instance in Eusebius (*Hist. Ecc.* IV. 23), that Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth, supplied the Lacedemonians with a scheme of instruction. For the first three centuries instruction was entirely oral, the catechumens not being allowed even to take notes, much less to receive books containing the doctrinal secrets of the Church. When persecutions end, we can see the practical work of catechetics in Chrysostom and

especially in Cyril of Jerusalem: there is a definite system of three courses, the first for outsiders, the second for catechumens, the third for established Christians. The method of catechesis was always the same: to begin with the story of Creation by One God, then through God's dealings with the Jews and their hope of a Saviour, and so finally to our Lord, His life, death, resurrection and second coming.

With the conversion of the Empire, the instruction of the ordinary multitude of simple folk became rather a problem, and for them St. Augustine adapted the same traditional method in his treatise *De Catechizandis Rudibus*. This book held the field through the Dark Ages, and indeed until the Reformation; but the later Middle Ages developed a copious literature to help parish priests with their pulpit-instructions, nearly always under the main headings of Commandments, Creed and Paternoster, sometimes adding sections on Sacraments and Virtues and Vices; there were also books of instruction produced for the laity, sometimes for the cultured but also for the simple (for instance the teachings of the Church in rough English verse, issued by Archbishop Thoresby of York in 1357, in "small pagynes" to the common people—the Wycliffites made use of it too, inserting passages of their own). With the invention of printing all such books increased in number and variety; and in some cases the natural practice was followed of putting the section-headings into question-form. Another kind of printed book was the primer from which the children learned to read; it contained the alphabet, and then the Commandments, Creed and Paternoster without explanations.

These three sorts of books—pastor's manual, lay folks' reading-book and children's primer—all contributed something, perhaps, to the Hussite instruction-dialogues, the novel device which Luther's genius seized upon and turned into a "best-seller." The word *catechism* had already been used by St. Augustine and others in the sense of an interrogation, as of St. John the Baptist by the crowds, or of the sponsors at baptism; Luther applied it to his booklet of instruction, which was intended primarily for fathers of families, to help them in teaching their servants and children. In its final form (1531), it was a booklet of about four thousand (English) words, comprising forty-two answers (some of them quite long) covering the traditional ground of Commandments, Creed, Paternoster, Confession and Eucharist, and it was written in reasonably simple and popular language, so that Luther's insistence on learning it by heart could not in itself have caused much educational damage. Memorizing is necessarily a prominent feature of any educational system in which books are scarce or expensive. Nevertheless he had taken a fatal step; in his anxiety to avoid the doctrinal chaos which the first years of the Reformation were manifestly bringing about, he placed all the emphasis of religious instruction on *words* instead of on *things*; in place of the authority of the Church living and teaching in her Liturgy and Sacraments, he put all his trust in the learning of a would-be "sound form of words." He called his Catechism "a real Bible for the laity," and said he would be willing for all his writings to perish save the Catechism and the *Unfree Will*.

Calvin's Catechism (1541) was already several steps

removed from the simple and popular language of Luther's. The English Protestant Catechism (Nowell's) appeared with the first Prayer-book in 1549, though the answers on the sacraments were not added till 1604; pedagogically speaking it was commendable for its brevity and simplicity, and has always remained so.

For a whole generation Catechisms continued to be the badge of heresy, but at length other counsels prevailed, and the Catholic Catechisms began in 1558 with that of St. Peter Canisius. His *Parvus Catechismus* was a booklet of perhaps five thousand five hundred (Latin) words, comprising a hundred and seventeen questions and answers, some of these being rather long—there is only one, for instance, to each article of the Creed. Its language, though of course accurate, has also a certain warmth and rhetoric about it, and all the points at issue with the Reformers are treated at considerable length. The Catechism of Canisius was used and translated in many countries, and some features of it survive in our present English Catechism, for instance, the division into Faith, Hope and Charity, which seems originally to have been suggested by a simile in a sermon of St. Augustine.

In 1597 appeared Cardinal Bellarmine's Catechism or *Dottrina Breve*. It was held to be an improvement on Canisius; Clement VIII ordered it to be used in Rome, and recommended it to the rest of the Catholic world; it was recommended by Rome to the American bishops as a basis, it was chosen by the Vatican Council as the foundation of the projected universal Catechism, and its text underlies our present Catechism in England. Bellarmine's Catechism consisted of ninety-five ques-

tions and answers (mostly long); upwards of seven thousand (English) words in all, say about half the length of our Catechism. It is a wonderfully able summary and strives to avoid over-technical words, though it is rigidly scientific and logical in its divisions and definitions, and of course not intended for young children. Bellarmine's *Dottrina Breve* is the high-water-mark of Catechism-making, and his successors and adaptors have mostly spoilt his work for want of a clear aim in view.

In the centuries following, more especially in the eighteenth and early nineteenth, a perfect orgy of Catechism-making went on amongst Protestants and Catholics alike. In various Catholic countries practically every diocese drew up a Catechism of its own. Meanwhile appreciation of the liturgy faded, plainchant was forgotten, and Jansenistic tendencies discouraged the use of the Sacraments; while the narratives of Holy Scripture had become disconnected from the teaching of doctrine, and were learned instead from man-made "Bible-histories" in which the letter was allowed to kill the spirit and the Messianic and liturgical purport of the Old Testament was almost forgotten, or survived as a mere conventional vestige. Catechisms became longer and longer and more and more ruthlessly theological and polemical, till in the course of the nineteenth century a certain reaction towards simplicity in Catechism-making began which (we may hope) is still at work. At the same time we now have movements of revival in Eucharistic devotion, liturgy, chant and the beginnings of a renewed intelligent interest in the *ipsissima verba* of Holy Scripture with

Christ once again central in the Old Testament as well as the New.¹

In such a history as I have imagined there would have to be a special chapter tracing the process by which the learning of Catechisms came to be imposed upon young children. A Jewish boy, from his infancy, heard his father narrate the facts of religious history to the assembled household—it was part of the prescribed ceremonial at such feasts as the Passover. But his regular course of instruction in the Law began at twelve years old,² and it seems probable that the early Christians would keep to this tradition. No attempt has yet been made to gather evidence from patristic writings or Church legislation on this point. Who can say, for instance, what was the age of First Communion at any given pre-Reformation period? Children in the Middle Ages, if at school, certainly learned by heart large quantities of Latin psalmody and suchlike, but no summary of doctrine as far as can be ascertained, beyond Creed, Commandments and perhaps some numerical lists such as the Seven Deadly Sins, the Seven Sacraments and so on. When we come to the Catechism-makers, Luther understood human nature well enough, and it is natural to suppose that he meant his Catechism to be learned by the older children in their early teens, not by the young ones, though these would naturally

¹ The above summary can mostly be documented from ordinary books of reference, such as the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, art. "Doctrine." See also, in addition to Fr. Tahon's chapters, a useful introduction in the Early English Text Society's vols. 118-120; also Schaff's *History of the Creeds of Christendom* and his *Creeds of the Evangelical Protestant Churches*.

² Cf. the finding of our Lord in the Temple.

pick some of it up from hearing their elders at it.¹ The same would be true of Canisius and the other early catechism-makers.

It seems likely that the imposition of Catechism-learning on young children became general during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries along with the movement for establishing primary schools everywhere; when the young children began to go to school it was taken for granted that they would learn the same things as the older ones had learned. A school was regarded simply as a place which existed to teach certain definite things, and the earlier a child began to learn these things, the sooner his schooling would be completed. By using pupil-teachers it was possible to drill large masses of children in verbal repetitions; in this way the parrot-system took firm root in religious instruction as in other subjects, and Catechisms written for grown-up lay folk and for children in their early teens (who are just as intelligent as grown-ups) were imposed on the younger ones for whom they were never meant. The first great shock to this method, as far as the Catholic Church is concerned, came in 1905, when Pius X demanded that the young children, and even the youngest children so long as they had some use of reason, should be admitted to First Confession and Communion, and that their instruction should be accommodated to their tender years. This effected a change of emphasis from words back to real things.

¹ See, for instance, a letter of Luther to the Elector of Saxony in May, 1525, in which he writes that thanks to the Elector all the boys and girls are growing up well instructed in the Catechism: "such young people in your Grace's land are a fair paradise, the like of which is not to be found in all the rest of the world."

Catechisms and sound forms of words could wait, while the realities of religion—facts and persons and actions—had to take the front place. This intuition of Pius X about the needs of childhood has now taken firm root in its turn and is gradually crowding out the misuse of the Catechism. The parrot-system will hardly survive into the generation after next. Father Tahon has no difficulty in showing that in the field of authoritative opinion the consensus against it is unanimous. It still finds some defenders in private conversation, and perhaps I may be allowed to complete Father Tahon's case by enumerating their arguments.

First (they say) Catechism-learning by young children is necessary because of the incompetence or mental laziness of the average teacher; few teachers are clever enough to teach religion in the ideal way, but any teacher can take a given set of words and get them into the children's heads. To which I think we should reply that teachers are not so hopeless as that; and if some of them are, then the less they have to do with teaching religion the better.

Secondly (it is also said) our teachers in England are now so well-trained that they can explain the Catechism and make the children understand what they are learning; and this being so, Catechism can be begun at an early age, the sooner the better, and it need not be mere parrot-work. The reply is that even the best of teachers cannot achieve psychological impossibilities, and it is a psychological impossibility for young children to "take in" the abstractions and definitions of the Catechism. We may explain to the children all the unusual words in some Catechism answer, and when they have

got hold of the meaning of each word singly we think we have avoided the parrot-system. But usually we have not, because they cannot make the necessary thought-connections, and the drift and purport of the whole sentence is still far beyond them. Their minds are simply not ready for it. Take the answer to "How is the Church one?" "The Church is one because all her members agree in one Faith, have all the same Sacrifice and Sacraments, and are all united under one head." Each of these words taken alone is well within the child's range of language or can easily be made clear to him; but the sentence as a whole, being a compact summary in abstract terms of a vast argument, means nothing whatever to the ordinary child of ten. His mind simply stops working when it meets such a statement, just as my own mind stops working when it meets a paragraph of Einstein on Relativity, even if I know the dictionary meaning of each word it contains. We may however note with gratitude that this argument cancels out the first argument about the incompetence of teachers.

Thirdly, it is asserted that without a fixed form of words teachers, whether good or bad, will just flounder about vaguely, with no pegs on which hang their doctrine, so that the children in the end will retain nothing definite at all. This is quite true, of course, but it is not a reason for teaching the answers of the Catechism to young children; it is only a reason why the teacher should often crystallize his teaching into little fixed phrases and sentences which the children will take in and remember. Any tolerable class-teacher of young children will soon evolve with them a temporary Catechism of their own, in their own language, and as defi-

nite and well-memorized as anybody could wish; but there is all the difference in the world between a living catechesis of that kind, created out of the mental contact of this particular teacher with these particular children, and the process of forcibly feeding children with the official Catechism intended for the grown-up laity; more especially when that process is urged on by regular visits of an outside examiner.

Fourthly, there is an argument which I have never heard used in so many words, but which is active, though perhaps not fully conscious, in the minds of those who resent any criticism of the parrot-system. "Religion is mystery" they might say "and it is in danger if the intellect plays too great a part. Why should the laity want to know about theology or Church history or how to use the Missal? Lay-folk can leave such things to the clergy, and their piety will be all the warmer and their spirit of sacrifice the more generous. They should take their religion entirely on faith and be discouraged from using their mind on it; and one of the best means of producing this attitude is the learning by rote of the Catechism in earliest childhood." I have tried to state this line of thought fairly because it is worth understanding, and yet it seems to me one of those arguments that only need stating in order to be rejected. The intellectual side of religion may well be the least important (though I should not feel altogether comfortable if St. Thomas Aquinas overheard me saying so) but it must have its due place in any healthy system of religious life and teaching. By following such advice as the above, we should be likely to produce a race of Catholics who could not explain their Faith even to their friends;

whose idea of defending the Church would be to throw brickbats at non-Catholic lecturers and hecklers, cheerfully regardless of the embarrassment so caused to other Catholics such as the C.E.G. people, who entertain some hopes of the conversion of England and do try to explain things to their fellow-countrymen.

Fifthly (they say) the children's memory is at its best during the early years, so why not take the opportunity to store up the words of the Catechism for future use? *Distinguo*: the parrot-memory, the ear-memory and the eye-memory, is at its best, but the mind-memory, the memory that works by controlled association of images or ideas, is a process which is only just beginning at the primary school age. Take advantage of the child's parrot-memory by all means, but rather for things like prayers and hymns which he can begin using at once.

Sixthly and chiefly, there is the argument often put forward, with a sincerity which deserves every respect, by many who are practical teachers, and especially by many priests and nuns. These are well aware that the Catechism cannot be appreciated by young children, but they say: "They may not understand it at the time, but the meaning comes to them afterwards." They are thinking of their own mental history, they remember how they learned the Catechism first by rote and have gradually understood the familiar words better and better since they grew older. Yes, but what they forget is that their own case is exceptional. The boy destined to be a priest is, *ex hypothesi*, an unusually bright boy to begin with, the pride of his pastor and teachers; his Catechism-learning is full of pleasant associations of success and vocational purpose; his religious studies do

not cease but go on more intensively at college and seminary, so that he cannot help but come to see how much is contained in the Catechism words, above all when he begins to *teach* the Catechism himself, and goes on teaching it all his life. It is not so much that his original Catechism-knowledge has gone on growing in his mind, but rather that his subsequent study and work has put meaning into what would otherwise have remained in his mind a lifeless corpse. The same process is true to some extent of girls who become teaching nuns, and of lay teachers too, as they are now trained. But the case is altogether different with ninety per cent. of elementary-school lay-folk; for them the Catechism is just as likely to have early associations of boredom, of ill-success and even punishment, or of the recurring panics aroused by impending visits of the outside examiner; and in any case when they leave school nothing in their daily environment is going to help towards bringing the corpse to life in their mind. It is simply not true that "the meaning comes to them afterwards." That may happen in the case of prayers learned rote-fashion, if they continue in use as the learner grows older; and it may happen to some extent with any vital and image-laden words, poetry for instance, or with the simple language of ordinary life; but not with logical and abstract statements such as make up the greater part of the Catechism. If the Catechism "comes back to them afterwards" it would be because it has been done over again, in the top classes at school or from the pulpit in church; and these after-processes are hindered rather than helped by the original parrot-process and its associations; the answers

prematurely learnt lie in the mind like decorations that have arrived too early for the party and have been forgotten in the lumber room, so that when the day comes, even if somebody remembers to bring them out, their freshness is gone.

So much for the arguments for and against. It remains for those who see the folly of the parrot-system to exercise a patient common sense in discovering how much real good there is in a custom which has become so general, so that we may not empty out the baby with the bath-water. Father Tahon's solution, worked out with missionary exigencies in view, will be found in his last chapter; narrative instruction followed by class-questioning (to draw out the doctrinal implications of the narrative as in the well-known "Munich Method") is the method for young children up to twelve years old, he says; from then onwards, deeper doctrinal instruction to be given straight from the Catechism of Trent. My own solution, having in mind our own English children and our own English school system, is a little different, and I am sure Father Tahon will not mind if it is stated briefly here. I believe strongly that we are right in having a short Catechism for the laity. Luther's idea (if it was Luther's) of building a permanent bridge of elementary theology that will be common ground for parish priest and people, is in itself a very sound idea; and the obvious way of doing this, in these days of printing and universal education, is to have it all in a little booklet that can be placed in everybody's hands. The question-and-answer form is as good as any other, and certainly conduces to clearness. The ideal Catechism would be short, but the individual answers would

be fairly long. It would follow the traditional divisions—Paternoster, Creed, Commandments and Sacraments—and would have a very practical bent in its theology. It would keep as near to everyday language as possible, but it would use the technical terms whenever necessary for scientific exactness, and would make no attempt to be childlike; attention would be paid to rhythm and euphony so that its words would fix themselves easily in the mind; it would teach positively and would not try to refute heretics or infidels except by implication. The right way of using such a Catechism would be to explain it regularly at Mass, and teach it intelligently to all Catholics in the secondary-school period (*i.e.*, from eleven or twelve years old). These pupils would be encouraged to get its answers by heart so as to possess exact and authoritative information about the Faith and be able to state it to their non-Catholic friends.

Father Tahon deserves our gratitude for fixing attention once more on the ancient narrative method of the Church, which is obviously indicated for young children (along with their liturgical and sacramental initiation), and which is equally necessary for their elders in the form of fully-developed history—the whole history of God's dealings with man. In particular, I believe our instruction of converts would be more completely successful if we used the narrative method and presented more of our dogmatic teaching, as the Apostles undoubtedly did, within the framework of that irresistible Story, which is ours to tell now as it was theirs to tell then: the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ Our Lord, true God and true man.

F. H. D.

NOTE

THE Editor has been specially asked to say that, while English readers are here given Fr. Tahon's arguments against the practice of making young children memorize the Catechism, it must be remembered that the office of teaching the truths of religion belongs to the episcopate, and therefore, in those schools in which the memorizing of the Catechism forms part of the syllabus of religious instruction, the method must of course be retained until a change is sanctioned by ecclesiastical authority.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

NO science is well known if it is not known historically. This applies to our task of presenting Christian doctrine for the first time to children not yet able to read, or even to unlearned grown-up people; in a word to BEGINNERS. For in this work we shall deal with beginners only. What does history, and therefore experience, reveal on this subject? What was the method formerly practised? What were its results? How can we account for them? What conclusion is to be drawn?

The purpose of this book is to state the following propositions:

The method of the Apostles for teaching beginners was simply the process of first presenting the facts of sacred history and then drawing out from these facts the doctrinal elements of religion. This method of teaching through sacred history may be called the narrative or scriptural method.

This method at once became the traditional method in the Church, and was formulated ex professo by Saint Augustine, precisely as the method for teaching the ignorant.

This method was the only one known and used in the Church for centuries till the troubles of the Reformation came to introduce a most unfortunate change.

But nowadays the revival of the old sound principles of psychology and pedagogy has thrown a new light

upon the failure of these innovations of the Reformation period, and upon the wisdom of the Apostolic method.

Thus, the Catholic teaching of doctrine, wisely guided by Popes Leo XIII and Pius X, is marked to-day by the demand, which is growing more and more general throughout the world, for the restoration of the old Apostolic and traditional method, the scriptural, Augustinian, or narrative method.

The above statements call for some explanation, which the following chapters are an attempt to provide.

It is the author's intention to follow the present volume with a second, which will contain a course of practical lessons meant for children unable to read and for adults who are beginners, as well as some suggestions to teachers in the use of the Augustinian narrative method.

THE FIRST INSTRUCTION OF CHILDREN AND BEGINNERS

CHAPTER I

THE APOSTOLIC METHOD WAS NARRATIVE AND SCRIPTURAL

TO discover the method of teaching used by the Apostles, we have only to open the Bible and see in what way St. Peter and St. Paul teach their beginners.

Read for instance in the *Acts* the first discourse of St. Peter on the day of Pentecost:

“Ye men of Judea this is that which was spoken of by Joel Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved by God Whom God has raised up let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David . . . God hath made both Lord and Christ this same Jesus whom you crucified” (*Acts* ii, 14-41).

When Peter had to instruct Cornelius, a pagan of good will, he used historical facts:

“You know the word which has been published through all Judea about Jesus of Nazareth went about doing good Whom they killed Him

God raised up He commanded us to preach appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead to Him all the prophets gave testimony.” (*Acts* x, 34-44).

The gospel of St. Mark has always been regarded as a practically *verbatim* transcript of St. Peter’s ordinary preaching. In other words, the story of their Master’s life was the Apostles’ constant subject when teaching.

St. Paul in the same way, at Antioch in Pisidia, keeps to historical facts:

“The God of Israel chose our fathers in Egypt divided the land of Canaan amongst them of David hath raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus God raised Him up from the dead as witnesses unto the people” (*Acts* xiii, 16-43).

Likewise when teaching the Corinthians Paul had begun by relating

“how that Christ died for our sins that He rose again and was seen by Cephas and at last by me” (*I Cor.* xv, 3-22).

And here we may observe a thing typical of the narrative method; it is only after establishing the historical facts that St. Paul proceeds to reason from them, asserting by way of a deduction the doctrine of the general resurrection: “Now if Christ rose again from the dead,” etc. St. Paul’s procedure was the same when teaching the Holy Eucharist; the story of the Last Supper comes

first, and upon this basis of fact he goes on to reason that unworthy communion is a crime (*I Cor.* xi, 23-29).

The practice of the Apostles introduced into the Church the most natural and interesting way of teaching religion and its mysteries—narrative. But the method was already an old one, used even by Moses by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Let us quote *Vigouroux* and *Fénelon*.

“The narrative of the Creation in the first chapter of *Genesis* is neither a fiction nor a myth, but a true story The purpose of Moses is to teach the people and to show that God exists and is the Master of all. But Moses does not proceed by abstract ideas and high speculations; he does not propose as a thesis *God exists, God is infinite, God is all-powerful*, and so on. He uses the narrative form and method; he relates the work and actions of God in that picturesque and popular manner of story-telling which is always welcomed everywhere and easily understood by the uneducated and by children; his recital gently persuades the meanest intelligence that God has all the above perfections. In no language of the world is there any written page that contains in so few words so many and such important dogmas. This cosmogony is, as it were, a condemnation of all the errors of the ancient world. The author speaks as a historian, and states facts without any comment; his first line rejects, at once, many false doctrines of even our own days. ‘In the beginning God created heaven and earth,’ consequently there is only one God, and the nations that adore many gods are mistaken.

Then also, since matter was created by God, matter is not eternal; it did not exist before being created. Since God created all out of nothing, by His almighty will alone, God is the absolute Owner of the world, just as the artist is the owner of his masterpiece. Some philosophers of old taught that matter was not distinct from God or was eternal; the narrative of Moses rejects at once that erroneous system, for *in the beginning God*, till then alone existing, *created heaven and earth*, a new thing, till then non-existent. The implicit conclusion of the first chapter of *Genesis* is that there is only one God, and that He is almighty, infinitely good and wise; that we are bound to adore him as our Creator, to love Him as our First Beginning and serve Him as our Last End.”¹

“Stories seem at first to require a long time in the teaching, but the truth is that they make the teaching much shorter: besides, a story is not a dry lesson like a page of catechism in which the mysteries are separated from their historical frame, and in former times it was precisely for this reason that children were taught through Bible history. The magnificent method which St. Augustine ordered to be used for unlearned people was not a method arranged by him, but was *the very method practised everywhere in the Church from the beginning*.”²

With Fénelon we assert that the narrative method inherited from Moses and the Apostles was from the very beginning adopted by Eastern as well as Western

¹ Vigouroux, *Manuel Biblique*, 1901, I, p. 453.

² Fénelon, *Education des Filles*, ch. VI.

Christianity. The earliest ecclesiastical writers were concerned more with apologetics than with catechesis; nevertheless we may gather from them some indications as to their way of presenting the Faith to the ignorant.

Thus, *St. Clement of Alexandria* (d. before 216) in his *Cohortatio ad Gentes*, after an introduction and refutations suitable to pagan readers, comes to explaining the Christian belief and does so by narrating the facts:

“From Sion is to come the Law and the Word of God, I mean the divine Word . . . this is the Lord who made the universe and who lately appeared to men . . . He performed marvels in Egypt . . . He to whom John gave testimony,” etc.¹

Tertullian (d. about 240) in his *Apologeticus* introduces Moses as contemporary of the Argive Inachos, the Egyptian Manetho, and the Chaldean Berosus . . . more ancient than Homer (Chapter 19). Then he comes to the prophets (Chapter 20) then to Christ, whose divinity he proves by the fate of the Jews as prophesied by Christ Himself and now evident to the whole Empire. Then the miracles, passion and resurrection of our Lord, appealing for corroboration where possible to pagan records.²

St. Cyprian (d. 258) in his treatise *De Vanitate Idolorum*³ also uses the narrative method; after he has established the idea of one true God, he presents the history of the Jews and their downfall, the foretelling of Christ, His miracles and His own prophecies, His death under

¹ *Cohortatio ad Gentes*; Migne, *P.G.*, viii, coll. 58-68.

² *Apologeticus*, Migne, *P.L.*, i, 434-475.

³ *De Vanitate Idolorum*, *P.L.*, iv, 583-604.

Pilate, His risen life and ascension, His future coming as Judge and the testimony given to Him by the martyrs.

The *Constitutiones Apostolicae*, an important work, dating back to between 309 and 325, contains a chapter whose title is: "How the Catechumens must be taught."¹ Here may be seen the different steps to be followed in teaching them:

"He that is to be taught in Holy Doctrine must learn the order of the Creation why man was made a citizen of the world how God punished the guilty by water and by fire, ... and how He protected the just, such as Seth Henoch, Noah, Abraham Job, Moses Phinees and others in every century; how God several times recalled men to the way of truth, redeemed them from servitude and brought them back from death to eternal life; all these things are to be taught the candidate (*qui accedit*). Then the minister who performs the ceremony of the imposition of hands will teach him the Incarnation of Our Lord, His passion, His resurrection and His ascension. When the time for Baptism draws near, he will teach the aspirant to renounce Satan and give himself to Christ"

St. Basil (*d.* 379), in his treatise *De Baptismo*² demands first that the catechumen should free himself from sin.

"Then [he says], we may learn from Moses, the prophets and the evangelists, that all things from the

¹ *Constitutiones Apostolicae*, VII, ch. 39, *quomodo oporteat catechumenos instrui*: P.G., i, 1038, 1039.

² *De Baptismo*, I, ch. i, *ad* 5, ch. ii, *ad* 1; P.G., xxxi, 1523-1526.

beginning have been created by God through His only-begotten Son; we also learn all that is related in Holy Scripture about the goodness of God, His severity, His patience . . . and the prophecies about the Incarnation of Our Lord . . . then, the story of His resurrection, His ascension, and His future coming as our Judge . . . All this is to be known and to be taught first; thus we are made worthy to receive the admirable sacrament of Baptism. We have had to impart to you this knowledge in special lessons, to give you at least a few of the principal ideas out of the many contained in Scripture.”

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386) wrote twenty-three *Catecheses*, twenty of which have come down to us.¹ There he proclaims his leading principle, that “even the most insignificant point of Doctrine must not be taught without the help of Holy Scripture” (*Catech.* IV, *ad* XVII, col. 475, *sq.*). And this principle is put into practice in a marvellous way. His *Catechesis* on the Incarnation (XII, col. 725, *sqq.*) is a summary of the history of Adam, Moses, and the prophets; then the Annunciation and the birth of Christ. The *Catechesis* on the Eucharist (XXII, col. 1097 *sqq.*) is worked out in the way used by St. Paul when writing to the Corinthians, with the mention of Cana, the promise of the Eucharist, the figures and prophecies on the subject. His *Catechesis* on Penance (II, col. 410, *sqq.*) is the most striking compendium of Scriptural examples ever written to move a sinner to repentance. When St. Cyril endeavours to refute the arguments of the Jews

¹ *Catecheses*; *P.G.*, xxxiii.

or even of Manes (VI, *ad* xx), his basis of controversy and apologetics is still history, facts from the Bible, the action of the Church, or even the intrigues of heresy with its errors and shameful rites. Let it be observed also that St. Cyril does not exact of Christians, even of children, any work of "committing to memory." He only requests them to learn the Creed "by heart" (V, *De Fide*, *ad* xii, col. 519 sq.).

St. Gregory Nazianzen (*d.* 389), in the second of his *Quinque Orationes Theologicae*, marks clearly the distinction between beginners and the advanced, and declares that the primary work of Christian education is done by Holy Scripture and the secondary by Theology; he says:

"To avoid working among thorns, we have levelled our soil; I mean, we have imbued our hearers with Holy Scripture, as we ourselves had been imbued with it; henceforth, let us take courage and begin theological instructions."¹

St. Pacian of Barcelona (*d.* 397) has also left us a splendid instruction, *Sermo de Baptismo*² in which he leads his catechumens through Bible history from Adam to the resurrection of Christ and to the eternal reward that "eye hath not seen nor ear heard."

St. Ambrose (*d.* 397), in his *Expositio in Lucam* says:

"When one or other of the Gentiles is called to the Church, we must follow this method of teaching:

¹ P.G., xxxvi, 26. "*Novitalia novavimus, terraeque superficiem complavimus, scriptura videlicet sacra tum ipsi informati, tum alios informantes: age, iam ad theologiae sermones accedamus.*"

² P.L., xiii, 1089-1094.

first, we must teach that there is only one God, Creator of the world and of all things, whose children we are, through the gift of life. . . . Then, when he is convinced that there is only one God, you will state that our salvation is due to Christ, and you will begin to tell about His marvellous deeds, in such a way as to make it clear that these were a Divine work, and to make it clear also that He Himself was greater than a man. You will then say that in dying and rising again from the dead He defeated death by His own power. Little by little the faith of your catechumen will increase, until he believes that Christ, being more than a man, is God. For, if you neglect to show that these marvellous deeds are possible only for a Divine power, how can you convince a man that Christ is God?"¹

It must be carefully observed that St. Ambrose was anxious to implant in the Church this Apostolic method for teaching beginners; for he immediately forestalls an objection to the method he has just proposed.

"Perhaps [he says], you will grant very little credit and confidence to my suggestion; if so, pray read the oration of the Apostle to the Athenians. He begins by preaching God, Creator of the world. . . . Then he comes to Christ risen from the dead . . . Such then, was his lesson to the Athenians, and such must be the order for us to follow in teaching the Gentiles."

St. Gregory of Nyssa (d. 400), in his *Oratio Catechetica Magna*, addressing himself to the Greek philosophers,

¹ *Expositio in Lucam*, vi, 1408; *P.L.*, xv, 1783, *ad.* 104, 105.

heretics, and Jewish doctors, enters into long discussions to refute their philosophical objections; but when he comes across an opportunity of instructing them in the truth, his way is to appeal to the narratives of Moses and to the facts and miracles of the Gospel.¹

Nicetas, Bishop of Aquileia (d. 414), in his *Instructiones ad Competentes*, says:

“Therefore, when somebody is anxious to embrace the Faith, it is necessary to meditate carefully and prepare those necessary lessons which unlearned people are able to understand and assimilate; nevertheless, such lessons are not to be drawn from our own brain, but taken out of Holy Scripture. It is from the Divine Letters that candidates for Baptism are taught.”²

Thanks to these Doctors, the way was paved for St. Augustine.

¹ *P.G.*, xlv. 23, 34, 69, 86.

² *P.L.*, lii, 873.

CHAPTER 2

THE NARRATIVE METHOD FORMULATED BY ST. AUGUSTINE

ST. AUGUSTINE (*d.* 430), having been asked for advice by a young catechist, the deacon Deogratias, wrote a small treatise for him entitled: "How to teach doctrine to the unlearned."¹ He also wrote a treatise on Christian doctrine for preachers.² In the first of these he gave a description and a summary or, so to speak, a *formula* for the Apostolic narrative method. He says:

"If you have to teach your hearers, you must do so by narrative."³

"Your narrative must begin at the beginning of Holy Scripture, at that very chapter which reads 'In the beginning God created heaven and earth.' Your narrative will come to an end only when you have finished telling the story of the present times of the Church. . . But do not imagine that you have to relate each one of the countless facts mentioned in the five books of Moses, or in the books of Judges and

¹ *De Catechizandis Rudibus: P.L.*, xl.

² *De Doctrina Christiana: P.L.*, xxxiv.

³ *De Doctr. Chr.* IV, ch. iv; *P.L.*, xxxiv, 91.

Kings or Esdras, or in the Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles; nay, you have neither time nor need to read or teach all that amount; you have rather to summarise the main lines and leading facts of these stories, and among them you will select those that are the more marvellous and pleasing to your hearers, and especially those that are mentioned in our Creed. Some of these facts are, as it were, a precious casket in which are mysteriously enshrined the articles of our Faith; such events must not be quickly related and soon left out of sight, but they must be considered for a good while, turned over and over, opened out wide and clear and presented to the inquiries and contemplation of your hearers. As to events of less importance you will relate them in a brief survey and connect them with the main lines of your narrative, and so you will go on, up to the events of the contemporary times of the Church.”¹

We must observe that the efforts of St. Augustine are bent upon *understanding* doctrine, not upon *memorizing* formulas. He says:

“In all your discourses, you must try and endeavour above all, to reach the *intelligence* of your hearers, through the clearest manner of speaking possible.”²

“All that I myself understand, I wish to make understood by my hearers.”³

“As long as the teacher is not understood, he must

¹ *De Cat. Rud.* ch. iii, ad 5; *P.L.*, xl, 313.

² *De Doctr. Chr.* IV, vii, ad 22; *P.L.*, xxxiv, 99.

³ *De Cat. Rud.* ii, ad. 3; *P.L.*, xl, 311.

not fancy he has said all that he is bound to say; for he has not said sufficient if his hearers have not understood him; but, if he has been understood, he has said enough, whatever may have been his way of saying it.”¹

St. Augustine pleads for “interest”:

“If your manner of teaching is not attractive or interesting, very few of your hearers, even among the most studious, will derive any benefit from it; . . . for it comes to pass in the school-room what happens in a dining-room: even the necessary food, if not tastily prepared, causes lack of appetite and repulsion to many.”²

He earnestly suggests the principle of “adaptation”:

“While we are on the subject of teaching beginners, I may say that for my part I adopt several different ways of teaching, according to the character of my hearer, whether he is learned or ignorant, a child or an old person, a man or a woman, whether he has come over from one sect or from another; and according to this point of view I arrange my discourse. . . . For, if we must have the same charity for all, we cannot offer the same medicine to all.”³

He goes further, and reveals to us the supreme *secret of success*; this lies in the activity and earnestness of the teacher :

“With great care, I meditate how to prevent any

¹ *De Doctr. Chr.* IV, xii, ad 27; *P.L.*, xxxiv, 101.

² *De Doctr. Chr.* IV, xi, ad 26; *P.L.*, xxxiv, 100, 101.

³ *De Cat. Rud.* xv, ad 23; *P.L.*, xl, 328.

defect creeping into my manner of performing this ministry of teaching.”¹

Therefore the first part of his secret is the careful *preparation* of the lesson. And now, the second part is this:

“The greatest care of a catechist must be to set to work *cheerfully, joyfully*, because we make ourselves more welcome to our hearers when we ourselves enjoy our work; our very utterance is influenced by our cheerfulness and joy; readiness and easiness are the result for us, and the lesson is received with greater pleasure by the children. If you wish to know the reason of my advice, here it is: ‘God loveth a cheerful giver’; this saying applies to spiritual as well as to material alms. But this joy too is a gift of God.”²

Modestly but clearly, as if to encourage us, he reveals also what the *result* of his method was:

“I feel that my tongue is often inadequate to my heart, and my own speech is displeasing to me. . . . But I can also often observe from the attention of my hearers that my speech is not so cold as I imagine; and I see by their pleasure that they derive fruit from it.”³

If now we inquire why the narrative method wins souls so easily, the answer is given also by St. Augustine:

¹ *De Cat. Rud.* ii, ad. 4; *P.L.*, xl, 312.

² *Ibid.*; “*ut gaudens quis catechizet.*”

³ *De Cat. Rud.* ii, ad 3, 4; *P.L.*, xl. 311, 312.

“It so happens that the very facts, by themselves, stir the hearer so deeply that no further endeavour of oratory is needed to stir him.”¹

No teacher has given better rules, programme and method for teaching doctrine than these; no one has pointed out more exactly the secret of success for a teacher; and St. Augustine appears in history as one of the finest teachers the world has known; to him applies the word of the poet:

*“Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci.”*²

¹ *De Doctr. Chr.* IV, xii, ad 28; *P.L.*, xxxiv, 101.

² “He wins the favour of all, who combines pleasure and utility.”—Horace.

CHAPTER 3

ST. AUGUSTINE'S METHOD IN USE UP TO THE REFORMATION

WE BEG again to recall the distinction between *beginners* and *advanced* learners of Christian doctrine, and we assert that throughout the Church, from apostolic times up to the Reformation, the only way used or even known, for teaching beginners was the narrative method, more or less according to St. Augustine's formula.

Though an enormous proportion of the ecclesiastical literature of those centuries has been lost for ever, we still have many witnesses to support the above statement. Among them, many will explicitly declare the rule that *beginners* must be taught by Bible history; others, without stating this rule, use it in practice. We shall present their evidence in chronological order; we will try to be brief, but the thesis is of such importance that we claim the right to illustrate the truth sufficiently, and to refute some erroneous statements on the subject.

St. Maximus of Turin (*d.* after 465) has left us three instructions to his catechumens which are, as it were, a last preparation for Baptism; his concluding words are:

"We hope, dear brethren, that you will not pay a superficial attention to our words, to the words of God; for what we teach you, we have taken from Divine Scripture."¹

St. Caesarius of Arles (d. 532), in one of his *Sermons*, uses a comparison which, though picturesque, seems somewhat crude; nevertheless it gives evidence to the practice of those times and sustains our thesis; he says:

"The priests in the Church could, in a way, be compared to a mother-cow, and the Christians to her offspring. For, the cow, as she saunters through the fields and meadows, grazes and browses among the grass and the flowers with which she will prepare the milk to feed her calf; so also the priest wanders through the fields and the hills of Holy Scripture and, constantly reading the word of God, must pluck flowers from which he can prepare the spiritual milk for his children, if he wishes to be a partner of the Apostle who said: 'I gave you milk to drink, not meat.' "²

St. Isidore of Seville (d. 636), in his treatise, *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis*, declares:

"That which is taught us by the Divine discourses in both Testaments, is what is to be believed; and according to that teaching we have to model our belief: for instance, that man and the world have

¹ *P.L.*, lvii, 782.

² *Sermo* 299; *P.L.*, xxxix, 2318 ad 4.

been created by God, and that there are no beings, visible or invisible, except God or the things created by God.”¹

For evidence of what forms the basis of his lessons, see his explanations of Baptism; its origin, its necessity its form, its effects, its minister, even the three kinds of Baptism, and the ceremonies of the anointing with chrism and the imposition of hands. All this he does only by producing quotations and facts taken from Scripture.²

St. Ildefonsus of Toledo (d. 669) has left us two treatises on our subject. The first, *Liber Annotationum de Cognitione Baptismi*,³ is a practical treatise in which he arranges the method of St. Augustine so as to help catechists in teaching beginners. The second, *Liber de itinere deserti quo pergitur post Baptismum* may be considered as a continuation of the first. It leads to a more thorough knowledge of Faith, and often develops the mystical sense of Holy Scripture; on one of these occasions the author uses the following words:

“Unless the knowledge of Sacred History has been imparted beforehand, it is impossible for the intelligence to seize the truly spiritual meaning; therefore we must first of all lead you to the knowledge of the precept [the letter, or the text] . . . and for this reason we must in regular order study the letter that killeth.”⁴

¹ *De Eccl. Off.*, ch. 24; *P.L.*, lxxxiii, 818.

² *Ibid.*, chh. 25, 26, 27; *P.L.*, lxxxiii, 820-826.

³ *P.L.*, xcvi, iii sqq.

⁴ *De Itin. Desert.*, ch. 8; *P.L.*, xcvi, 173.

Let us draw an important conclusion from this statement of St. Ildefonsus. He states clearly that sermons dealing with the mystical, allegorical or spiritual sense of the Scriptures presuppose hearers to whom the knowledge of Sacred History has been necessarily imparted beforehand. Now, apply this consideration to such collections of sermons as the one hundred and eighty-seven Scriptural Sermons of St. Cæsarius (d. 542) with those of some unknown preachers, or to those of St. Eligius¹ (d. 659), St. Bede² (d. 730), St. Boniface³ (d. 755); consider also that the sermons of those times and even up to the fifteenth or sixteenth century followed the same way, then so much in vogue, based on the same Biblical ground. With these facts before us, common sense can but confirm the statement of St. Ildefonsus that this manner of addressing grown-up Christians cannot be fully understood unless their fundamental doctrinal education had been historical in its method.

Leidrade, Archbishop of Lyons (d. 813). Charlemagne, the "Great Protector" of the Church and, so to speak, the "lay-bishop" of all the bishops of his Empire, sent them, in 812, a circular inquiring how their flocks were taught their Doctrine, and especially how they were prepared for Baptism. Leidrade answered:

" in every social condition there are souls who perish for ever and for this reason the Holy Scriptures must be taught, the Gospel must be made

¹ *P.L.*, xxxix, 1735-2095.

² *P.L.*, lxxxvii.

³ *P.L.*, lxxxix.

known, the terror of the Divine threats must be instilled, and the sweetness of Divine consolation must be inspired; for, among Christian people there are stubborn men whom only the thunder and hail of God's remonstrances will frighten; and afterwards, the shower of grace will soften their soul . . . Such is, in my own poor judgment, the answer I can give you briefly to explain how we teach our flock. . . ."¹

Amalarius, Archbishop of Trèves (d. 815) answered this same circular of Charlemagne in these terms:

"We teach those who ask for Baptism in such a way that on hearing they may not only accept what is to be believed, but also undertake the reform of their life. Now if anybody wishes to have more particulars about our method of teaching, he will find them in the treatise of St. Augustine, *How to teach the Ignorant*."²

Rabanus Maurus, Archbishop of Mainz (d. 856) is still more explicit than Amalarius. When drawing up the regulations for his priests on the teaching of doctrine, he simply copies the text of St. Augustine's *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, shortening it here and there.³

Ratherius, Bishop of Verona (d. 974), in his *Praeloquiorum Libri Sex*, gives evidence of the general practice in the tenth century:

¹ P.L., xcix, 337.

² " . . . de qua instructione si quis vult satis reperire potest in Augustino, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*." P.L., xcix, 894.

³ P.L., cxii, 1193-1203.

"You are a bishop [he says], your title sufficiently proves your duty. . . Remember Melchisedech . . . Abraham, feeding his sheep and digging wells to supply them with water. . . . And you also . . . be careful to try to dig wells, I mean the Scriptures, in order to draw from them a deep knowledge of the mysteries, and then present it wisely to your sheep, lest they die of thirst and ignorance."¹

Hugh of St. Victor (d. 1141), in five different works testifies that, in his time, children or beginners were taught through Bible history.

"Holy Scripture, as St. Augustine says, feeds advanced people with truth, and little children with sweetness."²

"He who in the Church by his teaching can convert sinners and who instructs the little ones after authentic Scripture, is the true spiritual *lector*."³

"The Doctor's pulpit is Holy Scripture, on which he must constantly rely; by means of this he must provoke . . . fear . . . love; but his speech must not provoke fear or sweetness to an extreme in young hearers (*parvulis*); but only as far as it is fit for them; thus will these children who are still on the lap of their Mother the Church, be filled with these feelings."⁴

"In the banquet [of Scripture] there are food and drink What in Scripture is easy to under-

¹ *Praeloquiorum lib. V, ad 2; P.L., cxxxvi, 286.*

² "*Scriptura . . . magnos veritate, parvos nutrit affabilitate*": *Summa Sententiarum*, preface *P.L., clxxvi, 41.*

³ *Speculum, de Mysteriis Ecclesiae* ch. 1, *de Ecclesia; P.L., clxxvii, 351.*

⁴ *Miscellanea, I, lxxv; P.L., clxxvii, 510.*

stand, that is the drink . . . the milk . . . [then dividing the difficult things of Scripture, or the solid food (*solidum cibum*), into three degrees, he concludes]: There are four classes of people to be fed: the little ones (*infantibus*) to them we give milk; the youths (*pueris*)—for them we break up their food and mince it for them; the young men (*juvenibus*)—for these we mince it no more; the men (*viris*)—for them we omit the mincing and even the breaking up.”¹

In his treatise *De Vanitate Mundi*, the author, conversing in a friendly manner with his disciple, seems to draw up a summary revision of his lesson:

“We have taken a walk together through all the work of the Regeneration; starting at the origin of all things, we have made our way through the course of time, through the events of History and the deeds of men, and we have arrived at the consummation of the world.”²

In the treatise *Eruditiones Didascalicae* he says:

“The instructions I have given above were given for the learned; but now, I will give other lessons for those who are starting to be taught, those who are beginning to learn the doctrine which must be the basis of their education.”

Then through a long dissertation, he proves that

¹ *Miscellanea*, clxi, *P.L.*, clxxvii, 558.

² *De Van. Mund.*, II, iii; *P.L.*, clxxvi, 720.

³ “*Quae superius . . . locutus sum, eruditis: nunc autem erudiendis et doctrinam quae principium est disciplinae inchoantibus.*” *Erud. V*, viii; *P.L.*, clxxvi, 796.

the first teaching must be done through Bible history; he even enumerates the books to be explained—six of the Old Testament, five of the New—and concludes:

“The fundamental basis and the very beginning of Holy Doctrine is history, from which later on full truth must issue as honey from the honeycomb, when the allegorical sense is explained. Therefore, if you want to build, first lay the foundation of history”¹

And to complete his method he gives the programme of his lessons:

“Therefore, read and learn that God, in the beginning, created man Paradise drove out guilty Adam saved Noah Abraham Moses brought His people into the Promised Land Lastly He sent His Son in the flesh He promised eternal life. . . . He will come again as a Judge. . . . of Whose reign there will be no end. . . .”
 “After the historical lesson, it will remain to investigate the Mysteries of the allegorical explanations; but this is the solid food.”²

Pope Alexander III (d. 1181) sent a letter to the Sultan of Iconium, who wished to become a Christian:

“You have accepted the Pentateuch Isaías Jeremias the Epistles of St. Paul the Gospels of Matthew and of John. . . . You request a letter from me explaining to you the outline and the tenets

¹ “*Fundamentum autem doctrinae sacrae historia est Aedificaturus ergo primum fundamentum historiae pone.*” *P.L.*, clxxvi, 801.

² “*Solidus est cibus iste.*” *P.L.*, clxxvi, 803.

of our Faith. I congratulate you on this good desire and I send it to you briefly. Therefore, I beg of you, try to believe piously and profess faithfully that there is only one God Unity Trinity But as man has lost Paradise the Son was sent born of a Virgin. . . . By His coming we have been redeemed Christ died rose again from the dead appeared ascended into Heaven We expect Him to come as a Judge. . . . And you must be consecrated by Baptism if you wish to be a partaker of the Glory of Heaven.”¹

St. Martin of Leon, Spain (d. 1202), in order to represent the two principal degrees of learning, uses the figure of *mountains* for advanced learning and that of *hills* for the first degree:

“In that day [when Jesus said: ‘Teach ye all nations’] the mountains began to drop down sweetness (*Joel iii*, 18)—the honey of spiritual intelligence, and then also the hills began to flow with milk—that doctrine by which the little ones (*parvuli*) of the Church are fed in the knowledge of God. This happened when the Apostles and their successors flooded all the Church with the words, the examples and the writings of the Gospels and of the Epistles. . . . Since the Ascension the mountains—the Apostles and eminent Doctors—have made the spiritual sense flow down while the hills—those who do not reveal the full spiritual sense—have given that milk with which childhood is fed in the Church.”²

¹ *P.L.*, ccvii, 10 sqq.

² *Sermo XI de Actibus Apostolorum*; *P.L.*, ccix, 149.

St. Bonaventure (d. 1274), in his *Biblia Pauperum* explains in a marvellous way, worthy of the deep-sighted Doctor, why teaching doctrine through Holy Scripture is so successful:

"It is well known that the narration of ancient events is very constructive. . . . These stories easily reach man's intelligence and produce in it a much clearer knowledge: for while these stories of old are related, many impressions and images paint themselves on the senses and in the imagination of the hearer; and from there these images will without difficulty pass to his intelligence. The more vividly these marvellous stories have struck his imagination, the more tenaciously will his memory retain them. Thus, what has been eagerly heard and what has produced a deep impression will not so easily escape from the memory."¹

Duns Scotus (d. 1308) attributes the same role to Scripture; we read in one of his *Scholias*:

"I maintain that Holy Scripture declares to us what the end of man is—the vision and possession of God. . . . It is Scripture that decides what is necessary and sufficient to reach that end. . . . All that is to be believed, to be hoped for, and to be practised, is explained to us in several passages of Scripture."²

¹ *Opera Omnia*, Vives (1866), viii, 483. Though the attribution of the *Biblia Pauperum* to St. Bonaventure has been questioned, all agree that it belongs to the thirteenth century; this is sufficient for our purpose.

² *Opera Omnia* (Lugduni, 1639), V, i, p. 63.

St. Antoninus of Florence (d. 1459) alludes to the works of the contemporary theologians who interwove philosophy with revelation:¹

“The true subject matter for preaching is Holy Scripture. . . . It is God Himself who speaks in it, and . . . so abundantly that all trials of faith, all marvels of Providence, all examples of virtue, everything, according to Pope Gregory, is to be found in it Holy Scripture is the only Book which is always true in its whole contents; but the doctrine of the Philosophers and of the Gentiles often introduces errors mixed up with truth; indeed, even the doctrines of the Catholic Doctors themselves, sometimes fall short of the truth or at least, state some points that may be questionable, for ‘every man is a liar’ ” (*Ps. cxv, 11*).

The author in his conclusion supposes a preacher whose sermon is based upon those philosophical and scientific works of men, not upon Scripture:

“That preacher is like a man who pays more respect to the handmaids than to the mistress of the house, because Holy Scripture is called the true Spouse, and other doctrines are only menials.”

Though we have not “a great cloud of witnesses over our head” (*Heb. xii, 1*), because all has not been written, we hope we are entitled to say that *beginners*, from Apos-

¹ *Sum Mai. Theol.*, (Lugduni, 1511, vol. iv) III, xviii (*de statu praedicatorum*), ch. 3, ad 3.

tolic times up to the sixteenth century, were always fed with the milk of Holy Scripture, that is, they were taught by the Apostolic, Augustinian, narrative method.

We feel more at ease in emphasising this statement, when we remember the words of Leo XIII, noting as an old ecclesiastical tradition the fact that "in the catechetical and theological schools, commonly established in the various sees—among which those of Alexandria and of Antioch were most famous—the whole teaching system consisted almost exclusively of the narration, the explanation and the defence, of Holy Scripture."¹

Modern research confirms the statement of Leo XIII, by the fact that, in Christian literature up to the fifteenth century, no booklet or pamphlet appears, compiled in the form of modern Catechisms, for the purpose of teaching beginners and for the use of children; and Schaff-Herzog rightly states that "Catechisms, in the modern sense, or compilations of the principal articles of Faith for children, were practically unknown to the medieval Church."²

¹ Encyl. *Providentissimus Deus*: Nov. 18th, 1893.

² *New Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (New York, 1908), vol. ii, p. 443 ("Catechism").

CHAPTER 4

DID CATHOLIC CATECHISMS EXIST BEFORE LUTHER?

PROTESTANT writers, when praising Luther for the compiling of his Catechism, have asserted that, before Luther, the Catholic Church had no Catechism to teach children, and thus neglected the religious education of the little ones.

Some Catholic authors, apparently anxious to refute such a futile accusation, rushed into the battle-field and, misusing the modern meaning of the word *catechism*, claimed that the Catechism had always existed in the Catholic Church; to prove it, they adduced various works of Christian literature, alleging that these were the Catechisms used and developed in the course of ages—giving us to understand that the writings alluded to were for the use of children and beginners. By such a line of argument they introduced a lamentable confusion between the teaching of children or *catechesis*, and the *Catechism* in the modern sense of a booklet for the use of children.

In truth, the catechizing of children was always carefully practised in the Catholic Church; but the Catechism as a booklet never existed in the Catholic Church

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before the sixteenth century; when it came into existence it was not of Catholic origin.

Canon Hézard, in his *Histoire du Catéchisme* makes such statements as the following:

(I) "The Apostles began by teaching the 'Catechism' orally before it was committed to writing."¹

(II) "Some written documents such as the *Didache*, or Teaching of the Twelve, have preserved the texts of the teaching of the Catechism."²

(III) "Hermas has left us a method of Catechism entitled *The Shepherd*."³

(IV) "If you compare the *Teaching of the Twelve* with the *Apostolic Constitutions*, this Catechism seems like an edition of the *Didache* adapted to new times."⁴

(V) "Alcuin composed a Catechism which is the first in the form of a dialogue. This work, called *Disputatio Puerorum per Interrogationes et Responsiones*, was a Catechism which started a new school; it is the first in that form to be seen in the history of the Catechism."⁵

(VI) "Another kind of Catechism appeared in the twelfth century, under the name of *Elucidarium*; the author was Honoratus of Autun; it was arranged in the form of question and answer."⁶

(VII) "The teaching of the Catechism in the form of the Septenary was in vogue in the twelfth century;

¹ Hézard, *Histoire du Catéchisme* (Paris, 1900), p. 1.

² *Ibid.*, preface.

³ *Ibid.* p. 13.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 21.

⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 105, 117.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 142.

the finest example of this form of Catechism was the *Somme-le-Roy* published by Fr. Laurens, O.P., dated, in many manuscripts, 1279.”¹

(viii) “Gerson arranged a method of Catechism which became famous and was in use for a long time; its title is *Opus Tripartitum*, *The Work in Three Parts*.² The bishops ordered the parish priests to read it from the pulpit on Sundays. . . .³ This order represents, if not the uniform, at least the general condition for the teaching of the Catechism, in France, at that time.”⁴

Such statements and descriptions leave the ill-informed reader under the false impression that the Catechism booklet, in one form or other, is as old as the Church, and that Christian doctrine must be taught to little children by means of such a booklet “as it always has been.” It is a pity also to see these ambiguous expressions and erroneous theories about the Catechism reproduced, partly, at least, by such works as the *Catholic Encyclopedia*⁵ and Vacant’s *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, quoting Hézard. In truth, not a single one of the above-mentioned works was a Catechism-booklet for the use of children, as we shall proceed to prove:

(i) As to the “Catechism taught by the Apostles,” we have already seen that it was a narration of historical events.

(ii) As to the *Didache*, we state simply that it is suffi-

¹ *Ibid.* p. 146.

² *Ibid.* p. 156.

³ *Ibid.* p. 156.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 153.

⁵ *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York, 1910), “Doctrine.”

cient to glance at a few pages of it to form one's conviction that this was not an instrument for the first teaching of beginners, for it alludes but briefly to many points of doctrine and discipline, without any explanation—as we should for those who are already initiated and understand what we mean.¹ More than that; in this supposed Catechism, only precepts concerning morals, discipline, and worship are to be found, but not a single paragraph on dogma, such as the Creed, or the life of Christ.

(III) The *Shepherd* of Hermas is only an exhortation about morals, penance and good works, written in allegorical form and in the style of the *Apocalypse*, ornamented with visions which are only imaginative, and it is absolutely devoid of dogmatic matter also.²

(IV) As for the *Apostolic Constitutions* we have briefly quoted its thirty-ninth chapter, "How the Catechumens must be taught," the answer being, by the narrative method (see above, p. 32).

(V) Alcuin (d. 804) wrote a long treatise entitled *Disputatio Puerorum per Interrogationes et Responsiones*.³

¹ *Didache*: Vizzimi, *Patres Apostolici*, Series I, vol. 1, pp. 43-73.

"In the church you will confess your sins." (Ch. v, 14).

"As for Baptism, you must baptize thus." (vii, 1).

"Take care that your fasting be not like the hypocrites." (viii, 1).

"With the apostles and prophets act thus: receive as God Himself any apostle who comes to you . . . when he leaves let him receive nothing more than bread . . . if an acknowledged prophet speaks to you in the Holy Ghost, do not test and judge him." (xi, 3).

"On the Lord's day break bread and give thanks to God, after you have confessed your sins." (xiv, 1).

"Let bishops and deacons be appointed over you." (xv, 1).

No explanation is given of confession, baptism, fasting, the apostles and prophets, bishops and deacons, or the breaking of bread.

² See Funk-Hemmer, *Histoire de L'Eglise* (1902), i, p. 154.

³ *P.L.*, ci, 1100-1144.

Here, indeed, the form is that of question and answer. But is that book a Catechism for little children? Does *pueri* mean *parvuli*? *Pueri* in classical Latin was the name given to slaves, adult slaves, as opposed to *liberi*.¹ In the Middle Ages many documents could be quoted to prove that the meaning *youth, young man*, was preserved.² We have quoted a text from Hugh of St. Victor showing that *pueri* is quite different from *infantes* or *parvuli* (see above, p. 48). Now, a glance over the subjects treated in the *Disputatio* will show at once that this was a book for students of theology, not for little children. From the very beginning, we read answers in which the pupil quotes texts from St. John, St. Paul, the Psalms, and even Ovid: "*Os homini sublime dedit . . .*" The last part of this voluminous treatise contains a request (about which Hézard is silent) that the student should give a brief summary of each of the seventy-two books contained in the whole Bible, including the Minor Prophets, —a task which many priests in modern times would eagerly endeavour to elude. The *Disputatio Puerorum* of Alcuin is therefore a book for scholars in theology, not a Catechism for children.

(vi) The *Elucidarium* of Honoratus of Autun (*d.* 1136) is not a Catechism, as is shown at once simply by its title, *Elucidarium, sive Dialogus de Summa Totius Christianae Theologiae*.³ It is a book for students in theology, containing even subtle questions, for instance, "Where was Adam created?"—"In Hebron, where he died and

¹ "*Centurionis cuiusdam servus male habens . . .*" *Lk.* vii, 2. "*Puer meus jacet in domo paralyticus.*" *Mt.* viii, 6. (Vulgate).

² John of Salisbury, for instance (*P.L.*, cxcix, 1018), calls a single group of students *pueri monasterii, adulti, adolescentia*.

³ *P.L.*, clxxii, 1109-1176.

was buried, where also he had been placed in Paradise."

(vii) "The teaching of the Catechism in the form of the Septenary was in vogue in the thirteenth century," says Hézard;¹ and he points out especially the *Somme-le-Roy* (1279), known also, he says, under the names of *Mirror of the World* and *Summary of Vices and Virtues*; then also, in the fourteenth century, the *Manipulus Curatorum* of Guy de Montrocher, and the *Doctrinal of Sapience* of Guy de Roye (1388), both drawn up from the *Somme-le-Roy*.²

The *Somme-le-Roy* is a voluminous book in folio, varying from 170 to 240 pages, according to the handwriting and size of the different manuscripts.³ It is not a complete summary of religion; the explanation of the Creed is only sketched: some of the articles are simply quoted with nothing but their attribution to one of the twelve Apostles; the Sacraments are not explained, except Penance and Matrimony; but the explanations about the obligations of the married state are of such a development that they are certainly not intended for children.⁴ Now the list and description of the seven capital sins and their derived sins (about thirty-eight), the seven

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 146. The Septenaries were treatises arranging Doctrine in groups of seven unities, such as the Seven Petitions of the Lord's Prayer; The Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost, The Seven Capital Sins, The Seven Principal Virtues, The Seven Sacraments; the whole was called *De Quinque Septenariis*. Other books added the Seven Works of Mercy, and, arranging the Divine teaching to their own fancy, added also the Seven Beatitudes, and were entitled *De Septem Septenariis*.

² MSS. 9544, 9550, 10320, etc., in the Bibliothèque Royale, Brussels.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ On this chapter Hézard is prudently silent.

chief virtues and those derived from them (about sixteen), the seven degrees of the virtue of mercy—all of this proves sufficiently that this book is a treatise *de peccatis et virtutibus* for priests and advanced laymen, or rather a book of ascetism, but not at all a Catechism for children.

The *Manipulus Curatorum*, a book of more than 200 folio pages,¹ is a summary of theology, teaching subjects exclusively ecclesiastical, like the impediments of marriage, the places in which Mass may be celebrated, the manner of asking questions in Confession, etc.

The *Doctrinal of Sapience* has a preface which reads thus:

“This book . . . has been composed for the simple laity by Mgr. Guy de Roye, Archbishop of Sens. . . and the said Archbishop orders that a copy of it should be kept in every parish of the city and the diocese of Sens, and that the parish priests . . . should read two or three chapters of it to their congregation.”²

This book is therefore for the instruction of an ordinary adult congregation, and had to be read in the place of a sermon.

The same prescription is given in many synods, e.g., the synod of Palencia (1322):

“Every rector of a parish must have in writing, in Latin and in the vernacular, the Twelve Articles of Belief, the Ten Commandments, the Sacraments,

¹ MS. 5379, Bib. Roy., Brussels.

² Hézard, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

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the several categories of Virtues and Vices, and must read them to the people on Christmas Day, Easter Sunday, Whit Sunday, Assumption and every Sunday in Lent.”¹

Such was the insufficiency of ecclesiastical education in these centuries that even at the Council of Trent it was proposed to compile a *Homilarium*, adding that “the vicars in the towns must preach; if they are ignorant, they must read the *Homilarium*, but in future only learned priests must be appointed as vicars.”²

An anonymous booklet appeared in Italy in the fifteenth century, which seems to have been compiled for the same purpose of being periodically read to the congregation. Its title is: *Doctrina Christiana*.³ It is an imitation of the *Somme-le-Roy*, but shortened to about thirty small pages. It is a dry summary of doctrine, not at all biblical or historical; a fruit of the philosophical abridging method of the Scholastics, and a step forward to the future “little Catechism.” Indeed it presents some appearance of questions, but these are title-questions, not the short question-and-answer system. Moreover the explanations of, and allusions to, dogmas are so short that they necessarily suppose an audience that has learned doctrine after a more detailed method. Vacant presents it among the Catechisms of

¹ Hefele-Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles*, VI ii, p. 793, No. 2.

² *Concilii Tridentini Diariorum . . . Nova Collectio* (Herder, Friburg, 1911), p. 113.

³ The British Museum attributes this work to St. Antoninus of Florence (*d.* 1459) and the printing to the year 1473. (Press mark, Gen. Catal. I, A, 19986).

medieval times, but reserves it for young men (*jeunes gens*)¹: we agree with him on this point that this work was not for beginners, or little children.

(VIII). Gerson (*d.* 1429) wrote his *Opus Tripartitum*, as he said himself in his preface, for four classes of persons: (a) for simple priests and vicars of little learning (*illiterati*) who had to hear confessions; (b) for any person, layman or religious, who was not very learned; (c) for youths and adults who beforehand had been taught from childhood the general tenets and principal articles of our Faith; (d) for persons who were on duty in hospitals and had charge of sick people.² Therefore it is not for beginners.

We conclude by stating that not one of the above-mentioned books which have been put forward by Hézard and others under the name of "Catechism," is, in truth, a manual for the use of little children and beginners.

In addition to the above works mentioned by Hézard, there are several other medieval works which have been called "Catechisms" (but incorrectly) by various modern writers.

One such small work is published by J. M. Heer under the title of *Ein Karolingischer Missions Katechismus, Ratio de Catechizandis Rudibus*.³ This work is rather a particular instruction or sermon for Catechumens: the subject is only about rejecting idols and admitting only one God; long and abstract explanations in the style of the Symbol of St. Athanasius are given, but not a word

¹ *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, ii, 1906 ("Catéchisme").

² See the Cologne edition of 1470.

³ Freiburg in Brisgau, 1911, 8vo, 12pp.

about the Sacraments, or the other Articles of the Creed: therefore, how can it be called a Catechism?

There is likewise the *Floretus*, which is, in the words of Hézard (p. 152), a derivative of the *Somme-le-Roy*, but in French verse. First, the *Floretus* does not use the short question-and-answer form. Secondly, since it is poetry, who would imagine that it could be used as an instrument for the first teaching of doctrine?

Many other books were composed by bishops, not to be simply read by the parish priests, but to present a theme for periodical sermons. Such was the work of John Peckham, in the form of a Septenary, presented to the Synod of Lambeth, October 7th, 1281, which reads: "Once in three months, the priest in charge of preaching must explain to his congregation the Creed, the Decalogue, the Seven Works of Mercy, the Seven Capital Sins, the Seven Principal Virtues, the Seven Sacraments." Then he gives a summary of what the priest must know on these subjects and also on the impediments of marriage, the sins for which excommunication is incurred, etc.¹

Vacant, besides, presents as the "first Catechism" written in German, the *Christenspiegel* of Dederich, printed in 1470.² This book³ is written in expository form, and is thus unlike the short question-and-answer kind of booklet. Secondly, it is very long: fifty octavo pages. Lastly, the detailed chapters he consecrates to the duties of the married state show perfectly well that this book was not a Catechism for children.

¹ Hefele-Leclercq, *Conciles*, VI, p. 280.

² *Dict. Théol. Cath.* ii, 1905.

³ See Christoph Moufang, *Katolische Katechismen des XVten Jahrhunderts* (Mainz, 1881), pp. 1 sqq.

Again, Vacant presents as a Catechism—apparently for children—an Italian *Trattato de Dottrina*, dating from between 1300-1350. This book is inspired by the French Septenaries;¹ its form is expository; and we venture to conclude that it was written for the same purpose as the Septenaries—as a summary to be read to grown-up people in the place of a sermon.

Lastly, Vacant states that a Catechism in question-and-answer form, belonging to the fourteenth or fifteenth century, and apparently also for children, has been found, printed in 1509 under the title of *Fundamentum Æternæ Felicitatis*.² If you read this work in the collection of Kunz,³ you will see that it is indeed written in the question-and-answer form; but you will be amazed to see that the supposed little children are able to answer the questions by quoting every book of the Bible and even Virgil, Cicero, Sallust, Cato, Ovid, Boethius, and so forth—in a word, books that many professors of rhetoric nowadays have never even read. Therefore, this was a book for advanced scholars, after the fashion of Alcuin's *Disputatio Puerorum*. (See above p. 58).

¹ See Portman and Kunz, *Fünf Volks und Kinder Katechismen aus dem XIIIen und XIVen Jahrhundert* (Lucern, 1899), pp. 349-384. It is easy to prove, by the way, that no one of these five supposed Catechisms is intended for children and beginners.

² *Dict. Théol. Cath.* ii, 1902.

³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 388-454.

CHAPTER V

THE CATECHISM OF LUTHER

DOCTRINE was for the first time presented in the short question-and-answer form for the use of common people and children by the Hussites.

A manuscript, written between 1420 and 1436, is preserved in Vienna¹; it contains eighty-five questions²; the answers are generally very short; some have five or six lines at most. This short booklet was later on reduced to fifty questions, between 1425 and 1450; a manuscript of it was found in Raudnitz.

It was about this time that the booklets of doctrine composed by the Bohemian Brethren appeared. Among these the booklet compiled by the Bohemian Brother Lukas was the first to be translated into German, and this version was printed in 1522; it contained seventy-six questions³; the answers are generally short but sometimes take up a whole page; it was not called Catechism, but *The Book of Questions for children and their Instruction*, or simply *Questions for Children*, according to its different editions.⁴

¹ See Jozef Müller: *Monumenta Germaniae Paedagogica*, IV; ("Die Deutsche Katechismen der Böhmisches Brüder"), p. 79.

² *Ibid.* pp. 79-86.

³ *Ibid.* pp. 11-28.

⁴ "Die Schrift der Kinderfragen und Unterweisungen," or "Fragen und Unterweisungen für Kinder," or "Anbeten der Sacraments," or simply "Kinderfragen."

It is probable that the Waldenses composed their own Catechisms according to the model of the Hussites.¹

Luther foresaw that this sort of booklet would be useful for the spread of his errors. He invited some of his friends to compose short works in this form on Protestant doctrine. Many responded so readily to his invitation that from 1522 to 1528 thirty-nine different schemes were presented to him, both in Latin and in German. Some of them were not in the question-and-answer form, but in the expository form—such was that of Otto Braunsfeld (1527), the *Catechesis Puerorum*,² and that of Hergendorfer (1526), the *Christiana studiosae Juventutis Institutio*.³ The scheme presented by Andreas Althammer (1528) was called *Katechismus*, but the author himself, feeling the necessity of explaining this new appellation given to this kind of booklet, adds a commentary to this title.⁴

Luther set to work and prepared, one after the other, the various articles which were to form, later on, his little Catechism: first "A short explanation of the Commandments," then "A short treatise on Baptism and the Eucharist"; and this was the first edition of his booklet published at the beginning of 1529.⁵ The first and even the second edition were already out of print in a few months. In a third edition, issued in June 1529, his booklet, now fuller, was called *Enchiridion, or the Little*

¹ Müller, *loc. cit.* p. 139.

² Müller, *op. cit.*, xxii, p. 332 . q.

³ *Ibid.* xxi, p. 366 sqq.

⁴ "Katechismus, dass ist Unterricht zum Christlichen Glauben, wie man die Jugend leren und ziehen sol, in frag weiss und antwort gestellt." *Ibid.* xxii, pp. 12 sqq.

⁵ *Dict. Théol. Cath.* ii, 1907 sqq.

Catechism.¹ Luther had definitely selected the form of short question-and-answer as suggested by the Hussites, and the title of *Catechism* as suggested by his own staff.

Now, what was Luther's pedagogical method? The answer is to be found in the preface of his Little Catechism:

"Reverend Preachers and Parish Priests, I pray you to help us in teaching Catechism to the common people, and above all to children; if you have not a better way for this, I beg of you to adopt the present booklet I offer you, and to teach it, word for word, to your people. I mean, the preacher in all his lessons must abstain from using varied forms of speech and different texts, when teaching the Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Sacraments and the rest; he must always carefully use the same text; he must cling to this text; he must impose it, year in year out; old people and young must always be taught through one text only, one that is very well known. If, on the contrary, on the plea of making progress, you teach one year through one text, the next through another, they will mistake their doctrine, and all your work and endeavours will be lost; experience has proved it. Therefore we must teach children and common people through one text only, and in such a manner as never to change a single syllable of it, at any time, in any year, whether we teach it or even pronounce

¹ To be exact, according to the text of J. C. Irmischer (Erlanger 1832), "*Enchiridion, dass ist der klein Katechismus für die gemeine Pfarrer und Prediger*." Then, the Catechism of Luther contained five articles (i) the Commandments; (ii) the Creed; (iii) the Lord's Prayer; (iv) his two Sacraments (Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar); (v) several daily prayers.

it. I pray you, therefore, choose the text you like best; but once you have chosen it, stick to it, when teaching the Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the rest; be faithful to that text, word for word, in such a manner that your hearers will be able to repeat it after you and to commit it to memory.

"If any refuse to learn it in that way, you must tell them that they are renouncing Jesus Christ and that they are no longer Christians, that they will not be admitted to receive any Sacrament, nor to be God-fathers; they will no longer enjoy Christian liberty, but will be handed over to the Pope and to his ministers, and lastly to the devil himself. Moreover, their fathers and overlords must refuse them food and drink, and they must be threatened with being handed over at once to the Prince, who will banish them from the country. . . .

"When the text has *first* been committed to memory, you will then, *in the second place*, teach them the meaning of that text in order that they may understand what it means. For this also, choose the text you like best; but, when once you have chosen it, stick to it, do not change a single syllable of it, as I have said above for the text itself.¹ Go slowly, if you will; it is not necessary for them to learn a whole article at once, but only one single notion after another. When they have understood in that way,

¹ However absurd such a sentence may appear, it is the exact translation of Luther's German text; Irmischer, *loc. cit.* p. 7 (italics ours). [I surmise that by "the text" Luther meant the actual words of Commandments, Creed, etc., as given newly in German version in his Catechism; and by "the meaning" he meant the explanations of these which follow them, also in the Catechism.—EDITOR.]

for instance, the First Commandment, you may pass on to the Second, and so on; if you do not proceed slowly, they will be overladen, and their memory will retain nothing.”¹

There we have *Luther the Pedagogue*! He has broken away from the old wise Apostolic and Catholic tradition of story-telling, which is picturesque, interesting and psychological, substituting for it something that deserves in no way the name of *method*.

It is a matter of historical fact that Luther was the principal promoter of these doctrinal booklets in the short question-and-answer form; it was he who popularized the name *Catechism* as applied to these booklets; it is he who initiated that parrot-system of committing to memory a text not yet understood—which is a cruel trial to the learner, and has wrecked many a child; it is he who imposed that uneducational system of explaining a text only *after* it has been committed to memory! And what an explanation that was!

Probst says rightly on that subject: “Such a method could not possibly be valued by other than Protestant catechesis.”² Graf says: “Such catechesis has degenerated into non-Christian pedagogy, since it has been stripped of all its biblical and liturgical elements.”³ Niemeyer says: “The schools from which these pedagogical propositions issued were built up within the pale of Protestantism.”⁴

¹ Irmischer, *loc. cit.* pp. 6 *sqq.*

² F. Probst, *Geschichte der Katolischen Katechese* (Breslau, 1887), p. 168.

³ Quoted, *ibid.*, p. 168.

⁴ Quoted, *ibid.*, p. 168.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION OF LUTHER'S SYSTEM

"Alligant enim onera gravia et importabilia" (Mt. xxiii, 4)

WE shall examine the system of Luther in the light of psychology, of pedagogy, and of experience.

(1) *Psychology.* Luther's rote-learning system is based on an error in psychology: to hurl directly at the memory a notion or a text, as Luther proposes with beginners, is to suppose that memory is an independent faculty; it is to repeat that common but erroneous saying that in our soul there are three faculties, memory, understanding, and will.

Bishop Bellord says on this point:

"This erroneous and unnatural method [of cramming the memory with immense burdens of unintelligible words], now almost exploded, was the consequence of erroneous psychological views . . . [as, that our soul has three separate and distinct faculties]".¹

Later on the Bishop maintains, with Aristotle, St. Augustine, and St. Thomas, that

¹ Bellord, *Religious Education and its Failures* (1901), p. 22 sqq.

"memory is not a special faculty or a separate department of the mind in which all knowledge is stored; but . . . it is an adjunct of each faculty . . . ; it is the storage and revival of past impressions. Every human faculty has this peculiarity—a repeating power, which is not another faculty distinct from itself. Just in the same way heat, light, and sound are reflected [by reverberation, radiation, echo] but the reflection is not a different thing. To classify the powers of the soul as the will, the memory, the understanding is misleading and wrong. . . . It would be the same sort of error as to classify together heat, light, sound, and echo. Echo is no more than an appanage of sound."

According to St. Thomas, memory is no more than an appanage of the understanding; and he concludes that "memory is not a faculty distinct from the intelligence."¹

Fr. Remer, S.J. in his *Psychologia*, 1925, writes:

"Today there is no psychologist who would state that memory is a faculty distinct from the intelligence."²

Experimental psychology leads to the very same conclusion as Scholastic psychology. Professor Van Biervlied of the University of Ghent states:

"Learning by heart, as an instrument of formation, is unable to strengthen the memory. . . Its results are

¹ St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.* i, q. 79, a. 7.

² P. 194.

simply derisory. This practice, as a special exercise of training our memorizing power, is to be laid aside. It is to be used only when indispensable, for instance, to state formulas or rules which have been previously well understood, or when useful for reciting a piece of literature previously well explained."¹

If such conditions are requisite for memory work, it is sufficiently evident that memory is the fruit of the intelligence. Professor M. Michotte writes:

"The impregnating of the memory with something, if we want it to be at all effectual, requires that the elements proposed for this memory-work should be very well known, understood and consciously connected together beforehand."²

This means a previous act of intelligence. The professor goes further:

"The reproduction, or recitation, is not an automatical result of the impregnation; it relies upon the mental attitude of the subject, and consequently takes place only in the cases in which the subject spontaneously tries to remember."

This means even a previous act of good will.

And now let us draw the conclusion of these statements. Since the act of memorizing is successfully performed only through an act of intelligence and an act of good

¹ *Esquisse d'une Education de la Mémoire*, p. 89.

² Lecturing on Experimental Psychology in Louvain University, 1926.

will, let us cultivate the memory as we cultivate the intelligence. Therefore, everything that is to be committed to memory must necessarily pass through the *gates* and *ways* leading to the *intelligence*, and these ways are the *senses* and the *imagination*. It must, therefore, be first of all presented to the child's external senses; from there it will be transferred to his imagination and sometimes to his heart—as, for instance, the pathetic story of Joseph—and only then will it pass into his intelligence, where it will be grasped and retained.

Luther therefore misunderstood psychology when he supposed that memory was an independent faculty with its independent machinery, ducts, pipes, tanks, tubes and spouts; he wrongly imagined that we could fill up and flood children's brains with unexplained formulas and definitions, as if the human soul was supplied with a kind of tank in which could be received and kept anything we might please to draw into it by the suction-pump of *psittacism*. This was the erroneous basis of his whole system.

As a consequence of this fundamental error Luther transgressed other principles of psychology also; and in fact he transgressed the principle of the *interdependence of our faculties*. Practically denying that the memory depends upon the intelligence, he virtually denied that the memory, as well as the intelligence, depends on the imagination, and thus also on the external senses. Luther therefore reversed the common adage of the ancient philosophers: "Nothing in the intelligence [and consequently in the memory] if not beforehand in the senses."

(II) *Pedagogy*. (a) We can see at once that Luther

has ignored the principle of *adaptation*. To condense Christian revelation within the small compass of statements contained in a little Catechism means, inevitably, representing doctrine in abstract and difficult formulas.

“In this respect [says Hézard very rightly] the authors of Catechisms have produced a lamentable confusion. The Catechism has encroached on the ground of theology and speculative philosophy. Under the pretext that the fundamental elements of the Catechism refer to theology, they [the authors] arranged the Catechisms in the form of a popular theology . . . Such a policy, unfit for catechumens and children, produced this result, that beginners were taught as scholars or students of theology, and thus received lessons unsuited to them, as well as losing the very lessons suited to their condition. But [he insists] the great teachers of Christian doctrine have always carefully respected the difference between lessons for beginners and lessons for students in theology; faithful to the tradition of the Fathers . . . they taught doctrine through the historical facts of Religion and the ceremonies of the Liturgy.”¹

(b) Luther broke away from the principle of the *logical course of ideas*.

No teacher nowadays would venture to deny that, to follow the natural order, teaching has to proceed from the known to the unknown, from the concrete to the abstract, from the easy to the difficult, from the perception to the idea, from the idea to the word, from

¹ *Op. cit.* p. 238.

the observation of a phenomenon to its name, from examples to the rule, from the elements of a thing to its definition, from the narrative of an event to its political, philosophical, or theological deductions. Now, Luther's manner of memorizing the Catechism reverses this principle, since it starts from abstract definitions, unknown words, difficult expressions, to reach, finally, concrete explanations, simple examples, easy facts of history. We can apply to the whole system the saying of Cardinal Mercier: "The word before the idea is nonsense."¹ We can say with Bishop Messmer:

"To make children *first* learn a thing by heart to be explained *later*, is not psychological, but it is a crime against the mind of man."²

"Through such an instruction children are given a stone instead of bread (*Luke* xi, 12)."³

"It would be degrading rational beings, were nothing further required of them than is required of parrots, which can learn to repeat certain words without knowing the meaning of what they say."⁴

"It is impractical to use in the school learned expressions and technical terms, as they occur in theological works, and to heap up definitions and divisions. . . . Technical words and scholastic definitions are for children like the unwholesome ingredients used in adulterating food, which impede digestion and cause illness."⁵

¹ *Traité Élémentaire de Philosophie* (Louvain, 1905), preface, p. ix.

² *Spirago's Method of Christian Doctrine* (1901), p. 191.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

(c) The system of "memory first, explanations after" also offends against the principle of *interest*. What interest can be offered to a child, or even to a grown-up, when he is condemned to swallow a mass of unexplained enigmas? This manner of presenting knowledge does not invite any work of spontaneous inquiry or of sound curiosity on the part of children, and therefore does not excite their interest. This method, as Weigand says, "is dry and tedious . . . a slavish task of memorizing combinations of phrases which have little or no meaning to the young mind."¹

"Unfortunately [says Hézard] there are too many modern Catechisms in which the interest and simplicity of Bible history have been supplanted by the unattractive reasoning and wording of philosophy and theology. This is a pedagogical anachronism we must get rid of; we must offer children, in their manuals of religion, the language and the notions which St. Augustine declared to be fit for them."²

Do not object that the question-and-answer form of the common Catechism provokes interest on the pretext that it is presented in the Socratic or heuristic form. This objection is well refuted by H. Marion; he says that Catechisms have only the "appearance" of the Socratic form:

"The Catechism differs so far from the Socratic method that it is, in fact, its very opposite. The

¹ *The Catechist and the Catechumen* (New York, 1924), pp. 21, 23.

² *Op. cit.* p. 52.

Catechism is dogmatic, not heuristic at all: it does not lead children to inquire and to find out for themselves; it only offers them knowledge wholly pre-constructed; the Catechism states and directly imposes definitions and formulas, then explains them, and systematically draws out of them all the notions contained in them."

Further on, Marion explains what a truly Socratic question is:

"In order that children may be able to answer usefully, it is necessary for them to have acquired some knowledge beforehand. The eagle and the vulture, in the word of Pestalozzi, are unable to get eggs out of the nests of other birds when no eggs have been laid in them."¹

It has also been said on this subject that obliging children to answer questions on an unknown matter is like trying to squeeze blood out of a stone. What interest can there be for the stone throughout such a trial?

(iii) *Experience*. Luther introduced *psittacism* into the teaching of the Catechism, and unhappily he was imitated in this by many Catholic catechists, notwithstanding the protestations of the bishops, the Popes, and the best authorities on education such as Fénelon, Fleury, Overberg, Grueber. The failure of that system became more evident in the course of time. Bishop Spalding says:

"Teaching Catechism, as this is commonly understood and practised, must be considered as little less

¹ *Grande Encyclopédie* (Paris, Lamirault), art. "*Catéchisme*."

than a waste of strength and time. Surely little good can come of making children learn by rote mere abstractions to which they cannot possibly attach any intelligible meaning, and which, if remembered at all, do not nourish the mind and enter into the mental growth by which the child is developed into the man.”¹

Listen to the lamentations of Dupanloup, Bishop Bellord, and Cardinal Mercier:

“The Catechist has to teach the whole of an unknown, difficult and mysterious language. . . . He has to explain the meaning of every word of the Catechism. In this respect, the most skilful catechists delude themselves: they imagine too easily that the children understand the meaning of the words. My long experience has convinced me that, both in the town and in the country, children do not by themselves thoroughly understand the precise meaning of any expression of the Catechism.”²

“I have examined many Catechisms. . . . I have before me a Catechism which generations of unhappy children have had to commit to memory, and I am not surprised that its diocese is notorious for irreligion and immorality.”³

“The Catechism-lesson should not be one in which the teacher dictates formulas to be committed to

¹ Quoted by Messmer, *op. cit.* p. 60.

² “ . . . les enfants des villes comme ceux de la campagne ne comprennent bien et par eux-mêmes le sens précis d'aucune expression du catéchisme.” Dupanloup: *Entretiens sur le Catéchisme* (Paris, 1868), p. 137.

³ Bellord, *op. cit.* p. 37.

memory. . . . With such a method of teaching, many children give up their religion very soon after the First Communion. I cannot help pointing out that the very cause of this early indifferentism is to be found in the faulty method by which they have been taught their Catechism. . . . The Catechism must be an apostolic preaching adapted to children and young people. . . . The fundamental truths, the object of the Catechism, are a dead letter for a great many Christians; why? Simply because you do not really preach them. I say, you do not preach them, because, when you speak of them, it is in abstract and frozen formulas which have no connection with the vivid life of the Christian soul.”¹

Ignorance, indifference, leakage, irreligion, immorality are the results of these methods: “by their fruits you shall know them.”

¹ Mercier: *La Vie Intérieure* (1919), pp. 253, 313.

CHAPTER 7

CATHOLIC CATECHISMS AFTER LUTHER

LUTHER'S Catechism spread rapidly all over Germany; in 1568 more than a hundred thousand copies were in the hands of the lower classes.¹ The need of a counter-propaganda was felt by all; it was deemed that it would be a good policy to use the same tactics as the enemy and to spread Catholic booklets and pamphlets among the people. For this purpose many writers such as Gregory Wicelius (1535), Johannes Dittenberger (1537), Frederic Nausea (1542), and Peter Soto (1550), set to work. Meanwhile, the Emperor Ferdinand also assigned to St. Peter Canisius, S. J., the charge of compiling a summary of Catholic doctrine.

Ferdinand himself describes the religious situation in Germany:

"The heretics are spreading their venomous doctrines by means of 'Catechisms'; for so they call a kind of booklet (*libella*), short, elegantly written, and attracting notice by the form of their method;²

¹ See Otto Braunsberger, S.J., *Stimmen aus Maria Laach* (1893), 57en Heft, p. 9.

² Observe that Ferdinand speaks of "Catechisms" as of something new, of which both the thing and the word need an explanation.

through these books they cunningly deceive inexperienced youth; they deprave and corrupt them. Every day this plague increases, and new Catechisms with new allurements are edited; they are distributed, they are read, they are introduced into the schools. To obviate such dangers, we deem that in the midst of such a variety of doctrines and sects, it would be useful to have a genuinely orthodox book, which could be propagated among and recommended to our subjects. To write such a book we have selected from among many other learned men of unsuspected doctrine, our honourable, pious, and dear Peter Canisius, S. J.”¹

Canisius therefore composed his *Summa Doctrinae Christianae*. The first edition was a book of one hundred and ninety-three pages. Though stated in the title to be “*per quaestiones tradita*,” this work is not in fact arranged in the form of short question-and-answer—the questions are rather title-questions; but the form is really expository. The method of Canisius in his *Summa* belongs to the school of St. Augustine. The subject as a whole he presents not in historical order, but in a

ation or definition. The same need of an explanation is felt by an editor of the Roman Catechism, Andreas F. Leodius, in 1570: “Everybody feels,” he says (*Christiana Respublica*), “all the wrong done to the Church by the heretics, not only by their speech, but above all by their pestiferous writings, which are adorned by the title of ‘Catechisms’ . . . a manner of writing which is so far unknown in the Christian Republic” (*nec ullum exemplum in eo scribendi genere habeat*). See *Catechismus Romanus* (Antverpiae, 1606).

¹ Extract from the edict of Ferdinand, dated August 14th, 1554, to authorize the printing of the *Summa Doctrinae Christianae* of Canisius (*editio princeps*, Vienna, 1554?). See also editions of 1560 (Cologne, 1561 (Louvain), 1566 (Cologne).

philosophical or theological plan; nevertheless, each point of doctrine is treated, in its turn, first of all, by sacred history; for instance, in teaching on the Eucharist, after the presentation of the subject, he embarks on it by referring to the passage in St. John's Gospel about the promise of the Eucharist and the incredulity of the people of Capharnaum; then he tells briefly the story of the Last Supper and gives the lesson of St. Paul to the Corinthians on that subject.

Of the oral lessons of Canisius, it is related that his teaching was very attractive, picturesque, lively and even humorous. The children hung on his every word for a whole hour and more, without the least sign of lassitude; what wonder, since he was above all a teller of stories? The parents only complained that their children remained too long in the church for his instructions.

As to the quantity of matter explained, Canisius proceeded rather slowly; he himself declared that, though teaching two or three hours a week to the same group of children, he remained a whole year or more over the explanation of the First Commandment alone.¹

The *Summa* of Canisius was very successful; this book was considered one of the best for preserving souls from heretical doctrines. The University of Louvain, wishing

¹ See for these details O. Braunsberger, *B. P. Canisii Epistolæ et Acta* (1896), iii, p. 631 *et passim*. The examples of the detailed preparations of Canisius lessons collected by Braunsberger in this important work of eight volumes gives us to understand how interesting he was in his oral lessons to children. It is to be regretted that all the manuscript notes of these lessons preserved in the archives of the Society of Jesus are not published *in extenso*; they would offer catechists a precious model of Doctrine lessons in our own day, when the proper method of teaching Doctrine is so unfortunately ignored.

to counter-balance the propaganda of the Protestant small Catechisms by means of a Catholic one of real value, asked Canisius to reduce his *Summa* to a brief booklet, also to be called *Catechismus*.¹ This was the origin of the *Little Catechism* (*Minor Catechismus*) of about thirty pages, by Canisius, published in 1558. Later on (in 1560) he published an even shorter Catechism of about twelve pages, called the *Smallest Catechism* (*Minimus Catechismus*).

Let us observe from these facts that the first purpose in compiling the little Catholic Catechisms was a polemical one; it was to counterbalance the propagation of heretical ideas among the lower classes by Protestant Catechisms. After Canisius, the Catholic Catechisms were multiplied in countless numbers everywhere, and this instrument of polemics was gradually introduced into the schools, and even put into the hands of the little children of the Catholic schools just as the Protestant Catechisms had been introduced long before into the Protestant schools.

The Little Catechism was henceforth used as a first means for presenting Christian doctrine to the young intellect. Thus the sixteenth century, forgetting St. Augustine's sound method of teaching, imagined that a weapon adapted for the battle-field of polemics would be equally a wise educational device in the school-room, even for little beginners. This seems an unfortunate confusion of ideas and a pedagogical blunder. It is right to introduce a Catechism into school for children who have learned their religion, in a first period, through the method of St. Augustine; but to use a Catechism, espe-

¹ Braunsberger, *op. cit.*, iii, p. 115. Canisius himself said so.

cially a very small short Catechism, for the first presentation of Doctrine to little children and beginners appears to be a mistake that the last four centuries have handed down to us—a mistake which many wise teachers most bitterly deplore and for which they are seeking a remedy.

CHAPTER 8

THE NARRATIVE METHOD VINDICATED BY THE COUNCIL OF TRENT AND THE POPES

(1) *The Council of Trent.* The question of teaching doctrine to beginners and to children was on the programme of the Council of Trent. We know that it was there proposed to compile two Catechisms: a larger one for the use of catechists and parish priests, and a smaller one to be put into the hands of the children.¹

The debates were intricate and long.² At last the composition of the Catechism for the use of catechists and priests was left to the care of the Pope, and hence we have now the magnificent *Catechismus Romanus*, called the Catechism of Trent, published in 1566.

As for the proposed smaller Catechism for children, it was not even decided upon, either by the Council of Trent, or by that of the Vatican. For what reasons? Perhaps we shall officially learn the reasons of the Fathers of Trent when the collection of all their daily *acta* is completely published. The same may be said for the Vatican Council.

¹ Societas Goerresiana, *Concilium Tridentinum: Diariorum, Actorum, Epistularum, Tractatum Nova Collectio* (Herder, Friburg, 1911), ii, p. 689; v, pp. 73, 110. This work is still in course of publication.

² *Ibid.*, i, pp. 50, 120; ii, pp. 468, 706; v, p. 132; viii, p. 219.

Meanwhile we may content ourselves with the following hints of the Roman Catechism: ¹

“The catechist must not imagine that the souls committed to his care are all of the same kind; so he must not imagine either that he can teach and edify all the faithful equally by one formula only, well fixed and commanded beforehand. Nay, since some souls are as new-born babes, others beginning to grow up, others in the flower of life, and others have already reached maturity, it is necessary to consider who needs milk and who needs solid food . . . The Apostle orders the teachers of doctrine to observe his own example of accommodating himself to the Greeks and barbarians, to the wise and to the unwise; he wishes thus to make it understood that in the teaching of faith or morals, they must accommodate their lessons to the *sensible faculties* of their hearers (*audientium sensum*) and [thus] to their *intelligence* (*atque intelligentiam*) The teacher must himself become as a child among his own brethren and as a wet-nurse suckling her children.”

Another reason apparently why the little Catechism was not proceeded with is that mentioned in the Vatican Council by Bishop Cantimorri of Parma: ²

“Nothing is more difficult than to compile a book of elementary instruction, because it must join clearness and exactness of truth with conciseness of expression.”

¹ *Catechismus Romanus, præf, ad ii.*

² Granderath, S. J., *Histoire du Concile du Vatican* (1912), iii, p. 108.

And Bishop Ketteler of Mainz insisted on this, quoting the complaint of the author of a Catechism that "it is easier to write a *Summa Theologica* than a little Catechism."¹

There is no getting away from the fact that the author of a Catechism of this kind will always be kept at bay by this problem of joining clearness with conciseness. Pedagogically speaking, the clearness of a text means that the ideas will enter luminously, easily and immediately into the mind of a child; conciseness means abstraction. Thus the problem is to introduce abstractions luminously, easily and immediately into the mind of the child. Teachers are unable to offer any solution, since what is attempted in a Catechism of that style is to neglect the use of the senses in order to reach the intelligence.

But let us now come back to the Catechism of Trent. In order to understand what the true idea of the Catechism of Trent is, about charitably teaching children and humbly accommodating the lesson to their *sensible faculties*, let us first read its magnificent directions; gentle, encouraging, intelligent, wise, and truly educational, they guide the teacher in the use of the narrative method

These instructions are repeated, insinuated, ordered in every chapter. For instance, in the article on the Redemption, the Catechism orders that:

"the parish priest should take pains (*incumbat in hanc curam parochus*) to explain well to the hearers the cause of the miseries and unhappiness of mankind—

¹ *Ibid.* p. 110.

Adam's disobedience of the order of God. . . . The priest will also tell them that the sin of Adam was transmitted to his posterity."¹

[On the Incarnation]: "The Evangelist has related at length the story of the Birth of Jesus; we have nothing to add, since the parish priest has the Gospel at hand; he must earnestly endeavour that these mysterious facts, which have been written for our instruction, be grasped by the minds of the faithful and thoroughly known to them."²

[On the Passion]: "The parish priest *will not omit* to tell the story of these facts, so well related by the Evangelists."³

[On the Blessed Eucharist]: "*It is necessary (opus erit)* that the pastor, following St. Paul's explanations to the Corinthians, should begin *before anything else (in primis)* by relating how that Sacrament was instituted by the Lord. The truth of Paul's narration is luminously confirmed by the Evangelists."⁴

[On the Sacrament of Confirmation]: "If the parish priests wish to show the efficacy of this Sacrament, it suffices for them to tell what happened to the Apostles on the day of Pentecost."⁵

[On false testimony]: "Sacred history is full of such examples [of this sin and its punishment]; the priest will take care to retell these stories."⁶

[On the prayer *Deliver us from evil*]: "It is necessary

¹ *Cat. Rom.*, I, ch. iii, ad. 2.

² *Ibid.*, I, iv, ad 10, 11.

³ *Ibid.*, I, v, ad 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, II, iv, ad 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, II, iii, ad 17.

⁶ *Ibid.*, II, ix, ad 5.

to inspire every one with confidence in God. . . . Many are the examples of Scripture which, better than any other reason will excite confidence."¹

It would be easy but wearisome to multiply quotations; it would be easy also to prove at length that the Catechism of Trent suggests and orders the use of history for the first teaching (*in primis*) of any part of Doctrine, dogma, morals, and worship.

The objection that the Roman Catechism does not explicitly formulate the rule that for beginners teachers must use the method of St. Augustine does not hold; for it can be answered that such an order, though not given explicitly and once for all, is nevertheless implicitly formulated and repeated at every article of doctrine, one after the other. The Roman Catechism, having been compiled for the use of priests in teaching their whole flock, beginners and advanced people, has carefully taken into account the need of all. Advanced hearers need solid food: for them the Catechism has arranged the doctrine in a philosophical order of matter, dogmas, Sacraments, commandments, prayer; and each part—a Sacrament for instance, is presented in its philosophical plan—nature, effects, minister, etc. But the same book has also a store of instructions for children and beginners—the milk—for at every chapter it suggests to the priest that, *before all (in primis)* he must *relate the story of the facts* concerning the dogma or the precept to be taught that day. Milk before solid food. Thus we may fairly claim that the narrative method is vindicated by the Roman Catechism.

¹ *Ibid.* IV, xvi, ad 4.

(II) *The Popes*. Not only did the Popes who published the earlier editions of the Roman Catechism earnestly invite teachers to follow the method set forth in it, but the following Popes also have recalled the attention of the Catholic world to this model of all Catechisms and to the use of the narrative method for beginners.

Benedict XIV, in his Brief *Etsi Minime* of February 14th, 1742, states clearly the distinction between beginners and others. He says that "the little ones (*parvuli*) must be fed with the milk of doctrine." All who are acquainted with Catholic tradition understand what that "milk" means; moreover, this meaning is explained in the same Brief by the immediate mention of another group designated as "youths," young men who are to be married, and "grown-up people," for whom the Pope allows the use of the philosophical form of the Catechism.

Clement XIII, in his Encyclical *In Dominico Agro* (1761), which is the preface to a new edition of the Roman Catechism, complained bitterly of the neglect of that Catechism and of the multiplicity of little Catechisms which have supplanted it. He says that these new Catechisms do not deserve to be compared with the Roman:

"They have produced two ill results. First, there is no longer any unity in teaching doctrine; this is a sort of scandal for the little ones, who feel that they are no more on an earth 'of one tongue and of the same speech' (*Gen. xi, 1*). Secondly, it is from these various manners of teaching that there have risen discussions, quarrels, and the disunion of souls, while

everyone says: 'I, indeed am of Paul, and I am of Apollo, and I of Cephas.' To remove these calamities from the Church, We have judged it necessary to come back to that point from which many authors have departed, some through lack of prudence, others even through pride, boasting of being wiser than others in the Church of God and leading the faithful astray with them. Therefore We have decided to present the Roman Catechism again to the pastors of souls. Thus, the method by which the Catholic Faith was nurtured of old and by which the minds of the faithful were strengthened in the doctrine of the Church, this same method will keep people far away from the new systems which have not for their support either the general consent or the suffrage of antiquity. . . . For these reasons the Roman Catechism has been set forth as a model for the teaching of the Apostolic Faith and of Christian discipline; the Roman Pontiffs have set forth this book also in order to maintain unity among pastors in the manner of teaching doctrine; and now We most eagerly recommend it to you, Venerable Bishops, and We beg of you very earnestly to order all in charge of souls to use this book in teaching their flock the Catholic truth. Thus We will preserve unity in knowledge with charity and concord among souls. . . ."

"But alas! O Lord, who hath believed our report?"¹ Clement XIII might have exclaimed!

We have seen the allusions of Leo XIII to the narrative method.

¹ *Rom.* x, 16; *Is.* liii, 1; *Jn.* xii, 38.

Lastly, Pius X, in his Encyclical *Acerbo nimis* of 5th April, 1905, when stirring up the zeal of pastors for teaching doctrine, divides the hearers into several groups,¹ proposing a separate time for each, and asking that the instruction should be given in very simple language, well accommodated to the capacity of the hearers. After these theoretical precepts he comes to the practical stand-point:

“In this work (*qua in re*) [the teaching of doctrine, *doctrinae praeceptio*] the teachers must use the Catechism of Trent; such are the orders We give in the name of Our Apostolic Authority.”

Further on he earnestly requests that the catechist should not speak in the language of human wisdom or philosophy—but in simple language, after the manner of Christ, who “spoke in parables to the multitudes; and without parables He did not speak to them” (*Matt. xiii, 34*).

¹ *Actes. de S.S. Pie X* (“*Questions Actuelles*,” Rue Bayard 5, Paris), ii, p. 84.

CHAPTER 9

THE NARRATIVE METHOD VINDICATED BY ALL THE GREAT TEACHERS

WE have already quoted the words of various educationists demanding the use of the narrative method. One of these, the great Fénelon, we shall quote here at greater length:

“God, who knows better than anyone how the intelligence of man is moulded, since He Himself created it, has inclosed religion in, and presented it to us under colour of, historical and popular facts; these facts, far from burdening the minds of simple people, are of great help to them in conceiving the Mysteries rightly and remembering them. A form of narrative such as those of the Creation, the Fall of Adam, the Deluge, the vocation of Abraham, the trials of Joseph, the birth and flight of Moses, will not only raise the curiosity and interest of the children, but will also show them the origin of religion and implant in their minds its fundamental criteria, with the deepest conviction. The teacher who would not acknowledge religion to be wholly historical would prove himself absolutely ignorant of what are the most substantial elements in religion. It is indeed through

a web of marvellous events that religion has been established and preserved; and it is through the same events that we get the rule and reason of what we must believe and practise. If we want a child to believe, and have some conception of, a Mystery such as the Blessed Trinity, and if we assert and repeat to him that in God there are three equal Persons having only one Nature, that child, after hearing and repeating such words, will be able, indeed, to commit them to memory, but I doubt very much if he will grasp their meaning. If, on the contrary, you tell him how Jesus was baptized in the Jordan, and how God the Father proclaimed from heaven 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,' and how the Spirit of God descended upon Him like a dove, then the child will see three Persons at work, and he will not forget it; henceforth, thanks to the different behaviour of each Person, he will always make a distinction between the three ; the only thing it will remain for you to tell him is how Jesus testified that the three Persons are only one God.

"This example shows sufficiently how useful stories are; they seem, at first, to require a long time in the teaching, but, in point of fact, they make the teaching much shorter. Besides, a story is not a dry lesson like a page of the Catechism, in which the Mysteries are separated from their historical frame; precisely for this reason, in former times, it was through Bible history that children were taught. The magnificent method which St. Augustine ordered to be used for unlearned people was not a method arranged by him, but was the very method practised everywhere in the

Church from the beginning. In this method we have simply to show by historical facts, through successive centuries, that religion is as old as the world, that Jesus Christ was expected throughout the Old Testament, and is reigning in the New: this is the summary of Christian doctrine.

“This method, indeed, needs more time and diligence in teaching than the teachers usually accord it; but, when children have understood the above character of Religion, we can say that they really know their Religion; if not, they have only cloudy ideas about Jesus Christ, about the Gospel or about the Church and about the necessity for everyone to submit to her teaching and to practise Christian virtues.”¹

Such are the words of one of the wisest of teachers in the days of Louis XIV, and on this point all the great names of Catholic pedagogy are in accord. Bossuet, for instance, in his *Catechism of Meaux*, recommends Scripture as the basis of teaching:

“When you have to explain a Mystery or a Sacrament, you must take as a basis the events that occurred in the performance of that Mystery or at the institution of that Sacrament. Your principal care must be to represent sensibly the things you have to tell the children; you must endeavour to reach the senses in order that through the senses you may reach the mind and the heart.”²

¹ Fénelon, *Education des Filles*, ch. vi.

² *Catéchisme de Meaux*, issued 1686. Ed. 1711 (Paris), p. 6.

“Remember that nothing more easily enters into the mind and makes more impression on it than a narrative; there is no better method than that of grafting doctrine upon it, as God Himself has done through Moses and the Evangelists.”¹

Fleury felt so much the necessity for Bible history as the basis of teaching Doctrine that he arranged a historical Catechism for teaching it (1679); this was so successful that it was reprinted all through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and even up to the present day.² His preface reads:

“It cannot be denied that the literary style of Catechisms is usually exceedingly dry, and that children have much difficulty in retaining their contents, and even more in understanding them. [The reason of this] is the use of the method and style of scholastic theology, which may be suitable for those who have studied logic and philosophy, but is quite unsuitable for children or ignorant people. The right method is essentially narrative; it starts with the knowledge of facts and uses them to explain dogmas and moral precepts. It is in harmony with the economy of religion. Has not God, who knows us perfectly, founded His Doctrine on proofs that all men are able to understand, that is, on facts? Is it not by stories and narratives that religion has been established and maintained? This method resembles the one taught us by

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

² Namur, Wesmael-Charlier.

God in the order of the books of Holy Scripture: the first and most ancient are but stories, the moral precepts come afterwards, then the books of the Prophets mingled with exhortations and predictions. It is the same in the New Testament: first the story of the Gospel and of the Acts of the Apostles, then instructions and exhortations in the Epistles, and lastly, the predictions of the Apocalypse. Finally, this method is the surest and the best adapted to every kind of intelligence. Everyone can understand and remember a story, for there one is drawn imperceptibly by the series of events, and the imagination is captivated. Although many people complain of their want of memory, a good memory is less rare than good judgment.

“One objection brought forward is the necessity for making Catechisms very short and of limiting oneself to what is strictly necessary, which excludes the choice of the narrative method for them, or any insertion of stories. Yet the shortest Catechisms contain several things less necessary than these narrations. There are scarcely any that say nothing beyond what is strictly of faith; there are none but are full of scholastic terms that common people do not understand: *infused, theological, cardinal virtues, dulia, hyperdulia*. The least possible use should be made (in oral teaching) of scholastic language, and of those abstract terms, *essence, substance, act, power, qualities, disposition, habitual, virtual*, which are not understood by most people. Scholastic language has the disadvantage of burdening the child’s memory with words that are strange to him and as empty of meaning as those of a

foreign language. You may tire yourself out making children or peasants repeat hundreds of times over that in God there are three Persons and one Nature, and in Jesus Christ two natures and one Person, yet each time you question them, you will risk getting the answer, 'two persons in one nature,' or 'three natures in one person.'

"Examples are known of grown-up people—well informed in other respects—complaining of their having to be sent back to the Catechism, for 'don't we know quite well that there are three Gods in one Person?' This comes of their having no idea in their mind answering to the words *nature* and *person*, so that they easily confound the two, and couple with either of them the words *one* or *three*, whichever strikes them first.

"But when these terms are consecrated to religion by long use, how are they to be avoided? By studying carefully the expressions—simple, clear, and substantial, and yet grand and stately—used by the Fathers of the early Church before the theologians had borrowed from the language of Aristotle and the other philosophers to define dogma and separate it from heresy. With the narrative method at our disposal, it is not difficult to make it understood that God is Father, Son and Holy Ghost, that Jesus Christ is true God and true man, without having to speak of *consubstantiality* or *hypostatic union*."

The great catechist, Bernard Overberg (1754-1826), sometime professor at the Pupil-Teachers' Training School at Münster, and later on director of the Semi-

nary, deserves special notice. While he was a student in theology at Münster, he used to go home to spend his holidays. One day some parents whose children had not been admitted to First Communion begged him to instruct these poor children so that they could be admitted to that ceremony the next time. Overberg set to work according to the ordinary modern method of the little Catechism, making the children commit to memory some questions and answers. The next day he noticed that all was forgotten or only half known; it seemed to him that his work was fruitless and useless, and he thought of giving it up. But after the lesson, the idea occurred to him to try another method. The next time he met the children, he laid aside his handbook and began to tell them some stories from the Bible. At once the children were quite different, their faces shone, their eyes were wide open, they listened eagerly, they visibly grasped at once the doctrine which Overberg grafted upon these facts; and on being questioned upon the subject, they answered without difficulty. This result was for the young catechist, as it were, a light from heaven, and that was the starting-point of his marvellous ability for teaching children. In 1780, he was ordained a priest and was appointed curate at Everswinkel. Very soon his fame as a catechist was known all around and at last reached the ears of the Vicar General of Münster, Baron Fürstenberg, a man of good sense and of great zeal for the advancement and education of the lower classes. The Vicar General wished to see for himself if what he had heard was true. Without giving any notice, he came one Sunday to Everswinkel, where nobody knew him; he waited till the time of the

Catechism lesson, and when it had begun, he cautiously entered the church to listen to it: he was amazed. A few days later, he named Overberg professor at the Pupil-Teachers' Training School at Münster.¹

Another famous educationist must be mentioned: Bishop Augustine Grueber of Salzburg (*d.* 1835). When a professor in the Seminary of Salzburg, he re-edited with comments the treatise of St. Augustine *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, and the clergy responded very warmly to his wise suggestions.

Our former quotations have sufficiently given the opinions of writers such as Bellord, Spalding, Spirago, Probst, Messmer, Mercier. We could also quote Wiseman (*d.* 1865), Hirscher (*d.* 1865), Gottesleben (*d.* 1911), and the late Bishop Landrieux of Dijon in his magnificent Pastoral of 1922 on *The First Teaching of the Gospel*.

It would be long, difficult, and useless to relate all the complaints which are formulated every day and everywhere about the poor and discouraging results of the Catechism-System itself as in general use to-day. In many countries, societies have been founded to improve the teaching of doctrine; many educationists propose new remedies. But union and progress are very slow, because: first, the distinction between beginners and more advanced is not sufficiently marked at the starting-point of their discussions (often for this reason alone their arguments fall into a state of confusion, persuade nobody, and fail to lift the pedagogical cart out of the mire); secondly, sad enough to relate,

¹ Overberg; *Manuel de la Religion Catholique* (traduction de Staedtler, Brussels, 1872), Introduction: Vie de B. Overberg, par G. H. Schubert.

NARRATIVE METHOD VINDICATED: ALL GREAT TEACHERS

many do not pay due attention to the Roman Catechism, to the method of St. Augustine, to the Apostolic Tradition, to the sound principles of psychology and pedagogy, and to the suggestions of successive Popes.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION: "MILK" AND "SOLID FOOD"

THE conclusion is simple: The "little ones" need the milk of doctrine—the stories of Holy Scripture, according to the method of St. Augustine.

This method has imposed itself all the more necessarily since Pius X ordered that children should be given Holy Communion on reaching the age of reason. This providential order of the Pope, requiring that illiterate children should be admitted to the Blessed Eucharist, demands also that we should use a method of teaching adapted to their illiterate condition. Providence has arranged all beforehand, and the whole Apostolic Tradition is there to hand down to us its precious narrative method. Consequently the idea of any Catechism-booklet for these beginners is nowadays out of the question. The children cannot yet read: would you then propose a book? *Nego suppositum!*

Divine Providence, then, by the voice of Pius X, compels us to come back to the wise Apostolic narrative method, which is intelligent, interesting, simple, easy, encouraging and fruitful, and gives to the mind a deep living knowledge, and to the heart a true love for Our Lord, admiration for His works, gratitude for His mercy and interest in His cause.

CONCLUSION: MILK AND SOLID FOOD

In practice children have to be taught by the narrative-method as long as may be necessary to teach them all the doctrinal elements of religion, which historically are scattered among the stories of the Old and New Testaments. This will require about five years of school teaching.

Pedagogically, the best plan is to follow the steps of St. Augustine and to use the chronological order—neglecting, so to speak, during this period, the philosophical or theological order. By a wise selection of stories, we can teach the principal dogmas, the Commandments and the Sacraments in less than four months, at the rate of a daily half-hour lesson; and then the children will know much more than was required by Pius X for receiving Holy Communion—experience has proved this. After the First Communion, it is easy to make a revision with the addition of many more details and stories; after two years of these selected stories, they are able to begin the complete history of the principal events of the Old and of the New Testament, such as are generally found in the manuals of Bible History for children. At each lesson, the teacher by questions stimulates the children to formulate the doctrinal conclusions of the narrative. This is the “milk.”

Now, when all the truths have been explained in the form of stories and are well known by the children, the teacher can use a book of doctrine, arranged in the philosophical order of matter. For now the time has come for the “solid food.”

But even during this period, with children of about twelve and over, “do not go to glean in any other field and do not depart from” the Roman Catechism! (*Cf.*

Ruth, ii, 8). We beg teachers to follow the lesson-plan of this magnificent book. For each article adopt this method:

(I) First of all recall to your hearers the historical facts relating to the doctrinal point to be taught that day. Then, by questions, guide them in elaborating their own dogmatic formula: this will be easy and pleasing to them. Lastly, give them the equivalent scientific formula of the Roman Catechism.

(II) Follow the form also of the Roman Catechism, which is expository: after the preparation and elaboration of the formulas with your hearers by oral questions, in true Socratic form, a good, complete exposition will then give them a general view of the subject as well as the connection of its several parts. After the oral lesson, such an expository summary may be read at home with much fruit. We say in an expository form because if your book is written in the question-and-answer form, the whole of the subject (as well as the connection of the ideas) is drowned in the perpetual interruption of the cut-and-dried interrogations.

* / * * * *

APPENDIX : NOTES ON THE EARLY CATECHISMS

(BY THE EDITOR)

I. THE CATECHISM ASCRIBED TO HUSS: ABOUT 1414

This is a four-page MS. discovered in 1869 by Palacky in Vienna, and conjecturally ascribed to Huss. (Schaff, *History of the Creeds of Christendom*, pp. 572 and 574, footnotes.) It begins with the following answer, which is found also with other resemblances in the later Bohemian and Waldensian Catechisms.

What is faith?

According to the Apostle (Heb. xi), faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.

II. THE BOHEMIAN CATECHISM

(Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, p. 574). First printed in 1521 and sent by the Hussites to Luther in 1523. Probably written by Lucas of Prague; but some of its questions are found in the earlier MS. Catechism described above. This has seventy-five answers, on Creed, Paternoster, and Commandments.

(i) *Who art thou?*

A rational creature of God, and a mortal.

(ii) *Why did God make thee?*

That I may know Him and serve Him, and that having the love of God, I may be eternally happy (*selig*).

(iii) *On what rests thy eternal happiness?*

On three divine virtues.

(iv) *What are they?*

Faith, love and hope.

(v) *Prove that.*

St. Paul says: Now there remain these three virtues, faith, love and hope, and the greatest of them is love.

Teaching characteristic of Huss is found in such answers as the following:

(ix) *What is dead faith?*

It is to believe that God is, to believe God and to believe about God; and yet not believe *in* God.

(x) *What is living faith?*

It is to believe in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

III. WALDENSIAN CATECHISM (BEFORE 1500)

(Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, p. 574).

This is written in the Romance language and is much the same as the Bohemian Catechism, being evidently derived from the same source, whatever that was. In its question xxxv, it makes a distinction between the true substantial Church (the elect) and the visible Church (hierarchical); and declares (xlvi) that "two sacraments are necessary for all; the rest are less necessary."

(ix) *What is living faith?*

It is faith active in love, as the Apostle testifies, (*Gal.* v); that is by keeping God's commandments.

Living faith is to believe *in* God, that is to love Him and to keep His commandments.

IV. DR. MARTIN LUTHER'S ENCHIRIDION OR SMALL
CATECHISM, 1529

This consists of five parts: Commandments (eleven answers), Creed (three long answers), Paternoster (thirteen answers), Baptism (six answers), Eucharist (five answers); and Confession for the Unlearned (four answers) added in the third edition (1531). The total length is about four thousand English words. Each section is headed "As it should be simply and clearly explained to every household by the head of the family." Its tone is mostly traditional and Catholic, except on the subject of faith; the Real Presence is "in the Bread," and "Christian" is substituted for "Catholic" in the Creed. Here are the first question and answer, followed by some others:

*The first Commandment, Thou shalt have no other Gods.
What does this mean?*

We should fear, love, and trust God above all things.

The Fifth Commandment: Thou shalt not kill. What does this mean?

We should so fear and love God as not to do our neighbour any injury or harm in his body, but help and defend him in all bodily troubles.

What does Baptism give, or of what use is it.

It worketh forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives everlasting salvation to all who believe, as the Word and promise of God declare.

How can water do such great things?

It is not water, indeed, that does it, but the Word of God which is with and in the water, and faith, which trusts in the Word of God in the water. For without the Word of God the water is nothing but water, and no baptism; but with the Word of God it is a baptism—that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Ghost, as St. Paul says (*Titus iii*): By the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus our Saviour; that being justified by His grace we should be made heirs accordingly to the hope of eternal life. This is certainly true.

V. CALVIN'S CATECHISM OF 1541.

This is the one in question-and-answer form; he had previously written a larger one in expository form. Its plan is: Creed, Commandments, Paternoster, Word of God, and Sacraments. It is less popular in language than Luther's, and is divided into lessons for the Sundays of the year.

(i) *What is the principal end of human life?*

That men may know God by whom they are made.

(ii) *What reason have you for saying this?*

Because He created us and placed us in the world that He may be glorified in us. And indeed it is right that our life should be referred to His glory, He being the origin of it.

(iii) *What is the highest good of man?*

That self-same thing (*illud ipsum*).

VI. THE ANGLICAN CATECHISM, 1549

This appeared as a section of the first Prayer Book, before Confirmation: "An instruction to be learned of every person before he be brought to be confirmed by the Bishop." It is very short, about 2,000 words, and covers the ground of Baptismal Promises, Creed, Commandments, Paternoster, and Sacraments (the last section being added in 1604). The Creed is explained in one short answer, the Commandments in two long ones (duty to God and to neighbour) and the Paternoster in one long one. Here are the first two answers, and some others:

What is your name?

N. or M.

Who gave you this name?

My Godfathers and Godmothers in my Baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

What is thy duty towards thy Neighbour?

My duty towards my Neighbour is to love him as myself, and to do to all men as I would they should do unto me: To love, honour and succour my father and mother: To honour and obey the King and all that are put in authority under him: To submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters: To order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters: To hurt nobody by word nor deed: To be true and just in all my dealing: To bear no malice nor hatred in my heart: To keep my hands from picking and stealing and my tongue from evil-speaking, lying and slandering: To keep my body in temperance,

soberness, and chastity: Not to covet nor desire other men's goods; but to learn and labour truly to get mine own living, and to do my duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call me

What meanest thou by this word Sacrament?

I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof.

What is required of them who come to the Lord's Supper?

To examine themselves, whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life; have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death: and to be in charity with all men.

VII. THE PARVUS CATECHISMUS OF ST. PETER CANISIUS,
1558.

This, the first Catholic Catechism, had an enormous vogue in many languages, devoting much space to points denied by the Protestants. It consisted of one hundred and seventeen questions and answers, about five thousand five hundred Latin words. The first answer is given below, followed by others taken at random. They are translated from a Latin-Polish edition, bound up with a Latin-Polish grammar for Jesuit schools, dated 1756; British Museum 628, d. 23.

Who should be called Christian and Catholic?

One who is initiated by the sacrament of Baptism, who professes the salutary doctrine of the true God and Man in His Church, and does not adhere to any sects or opinions alien from the Catholic Church.

APPENDIX

About what should Christians be first taught?

About Faith, Hope and Charity, the Sacraments and the duties of Christian righteousness.

What is Faith?

Faith is a gift of God, and a light by which when a man is enlightened, he believes all things that God has revealed, and that are set forth by the Church to be believed, whether these things are written or not.

What adoration is due to this Sacrament?

The same, certainly, which is due to Christ the Lord God eternal, since it is He whom we recognise as present there. And so by the religious worship both of body and soul, we bow down and venerate this Sacrament for what it is.

What does the fourth Article mean?

It treats of the mystery of human redemption, namely, that the same true Son of God truly suffered to the uttermost, according to that assumed nature, in order to redeem us. Therefore, though He was the Lamb without stain, nevertheless he was nailed to the Cross under the governor Pontius Pilate, and on the Cross He died, and thereafter was buried.

VIII. THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM (1563)

(Schaff, *Creeds of the Evang. Prot. Churches*, p. 307).

This was drawn up by the Palatinate Protestants under the influence of Melancthon, has been widely adopted in all Protestant countries and is still used by the German Reformed Church. It is moderately Calvinistic, and follows a plan taken from the *Epistle to the Romans*: Part I, Man's Sin and Misery; Part II, Redemption (Creed and Sacraments); Part III, Thankfulness for

Redemption (Commandments and Paternoster). There are one hundred and twenty-nine answers, mostly long and theological, but also with a constant appeal to the heart as well as the head.

What is thy only comfort in life and in death?

That I, with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ, who with His precious blood has made full satisfaction for all my sins, and redeemed me from all power of the devil, and so preserves me that without the will of my Father in heaven not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must work together for my salvation. Wherefore by His Holy Spirit He also assures me of eternal life and makes me heartily willing to live unto Him.

How many things are necessary for thee to know, that thou in this comfort mayest live and die happily?

Three things: first, the greatness of my sins and misery; secondly, how I am redeemed from all my sins and misery; thirdly, how I am to be thankful to God for such redemption.

IX. BELLARMINE'S SMALL CATECHISM (DOTTRINA BREVE)

This appeared in 1597, and has ever since held first place in the esteem of the Roman authorities. There are ninety-five questions and answers, upwards of seven thousand English words; strictly theological, plain and rather abstract in language, no controversial preoccupation whatever, and no quotation of Scriptural texts. It begins with a few questions on the Sign of the Cross, and then follows the fourfold plan of Creed, Paternoster with Ave Maria, Commandments and Sacra-

ments. Finally there is a sort of appendix on Virtues and Vices. Only one answer is allotted to each article of the Creed, or each Commandment or Sacrament, consequently many of the answers are fairly long. We may give here some answers covering the same ground as those of Canisius given above.

Are you a Christian?

Yes, I am a Christian by the grace of God.

What is a Christian?

One who is baptised and professes the faith and the law of Jesus Christ.

What is the short profession of the faith and law of Jesus Christ?

It is the Sign of the Cross, which contains the two chief mysteries of Christianity: namely, the mystery of the Unity and Trinity of God, and the mystery of the Incarnation and Death of our Saviour.

Explain the fourth article.

I believe that Jesus Christ, in order to redeem the world by His precious blood, suffered under Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea, was scourged, crowned with thorns, nailed to a cross on which he died; and after was taken down from it and buried in a new tomb.

What is the effect of the Eucharist?

It feeds charity, which is the life of the soul, and makes it grow daily more and more. That is why it is given under the appearance of bread, although what we receive is not bread but the true Body of Jesus Christ; just as what is in the chalice is not wine, but the true blood of the same Jesus Christ, under the semblance of wine.

How does Faith have God for its object and pertain to Him?

It has God for its object inasmuch as we believe on account of His infallible truthfulness, when we accept by faith everything He has revealed to His Church.

X. THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM, 1647

(Schaff, *Creeds of Evang. Prot. Churches*, p. 676). Presbyterian and Nonconformist, and distributed widely over the English-speaking world, this work has by its style had much influence on Catholic makers of Catechisms in English. It consists of one hundred and seven answers, fairly short, but in the driest and most abstract language possible. It relegates the Creed to an appendix, and follows a logical scheme of Fall, Redemption, Commandments, Sacraments, and Paternoster. Its answers repeat the question so as to form complete statements.

(i) *What is the chief end of man?*

Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever.

(vii) *What are the decrees of God?*

The decrees of God are his eternal purpose according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath pre-ordained whatsoever comes to pass.

(xxxiii) *What is justification?*

Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as

righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imparted to us, and received by faith alone.

(xcii) *What is a Sacrament?*

A Sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ; wherein, by sensible signs, Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed and applied to believers.

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